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SCENE IN 1812.

THE RETREAT FROM MOSCOW.

W. H. Page

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND TWELVE;

O R

NAPOLEON'S INVASION OF RUSSIA.



An Historical Romance.

BY LOUIS RELLSTAB.

NEW YORK:
STRINGER & TOWNSEND, 222 BROADWAY.

1849.

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9 March 6 1848

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Of the Author of "Eighteen Hundred and Twelve."

[From Blackwood's Magazine for August, 1848.]

In the spring of the year 1815, a youth of sixteen, LEWIS RELLSTAB by name, whom death had recently deprived of his father, left the Berlin academy, where he was pursuing, with much success, the study of music, to enter the Prussian army as a volunteer. Napoleon's return from Elba had just called Germany to arms; and the rising generation, emulous of their elder brethren, whose scars and decorations recalled the glorious campaign of 1813, flocked to the Prussian banner. But young RELLSTAB's moral courage and patriotic zeal exceeded his physical capabilities. Recruiting officers shook their heads at his delicate frame, and inspecting surgeons refused to pass him as able-bodied. Rejected, he still persevered, entered a military school, and in due time became an officer of artillery. Leaving service in 1821, he fixed himself at Berlin, and applied diligently to literary pursuits. He was already known as the author of songs of merit, some of which are popular in Germany to the present day; but now he took up literature as a profession, stimulated to industry by loss of fortune in an unlucky speculation. Of great perseverance, and active mind, he essayed his talents in various departments of the belles-lettres, in journalism, polemics, and criticism. As a musical critic, he ranks amongst the very best. One of his early works, a satirical tale entitled "Henrietta, the beautiful Singer," was disapproved by the authorities, and procured him several months' imprisonment in the fortress of Spandau. At a later period, his systematic and incessant opposition to Spontini, the composer, from whose appointment as director of the Berlin opera, he foretold the ruin of the German school of music, procured him another six weeks of similar punishment. He has managed several newspapers in succession, and in the intervals of his editorial labors, has produced a number of fine tales and novels.

RELLSTAB is one of the few living German novelists whose works rise high above the present dull, stagnant level of the light literature of his country. It is not now our intention minutely to analyse Mr. RELLSTAB's literary abilities, or to criticise the twenty compendious volumes forming the latest edition of his complete works. We propose confining ourselves to one novel, which we consider his masterpiece, as it is also his longest and most important work, and the one most popular in Germany. Notwithstanding faults we might have glanced at, we hold "1812" the best novel of its class that for a long time has appeared in the German language. Its historical and military chap-

ters would, by their fidelity and spirit, give it high rank in whatever tongue it had been written. And the blemishes observable in its more imaginative and romantic portions are chargeable less upon the author than upon the foibles of the school and country to which he belongs.

A translation from the German, unless it be of a short tale in a periodical, is a thing almost unknown—certainly of rare occurrence. Miss Bremer's poultry-yard romances, and Christian Andersen's novels, reached us through a German medium, but are originally Scandinavian. The only other recent translations of novels, in amount and volume worth the naming, are those from the French of Sue, Dumas, and Co., amusing gentlemen enough. The German literature of the last twenty years has yielded little to the English translator, or rather has been little made use of; for, without entertaining a very exalted opinion of its value and merit, it were absurd to suppose that some good things might not be selected from the hundreds of novels, tales, and romances, that each successive year brings forth in a country where any man who can hold a pen, deems himself qualified for an author; and where an astonishingly large proportion of the population act upon this conviction. *Mr. Rellstab's "1812" is one of the few ears of wheat worthy of extraction from the wilderness of tares and stubble.*

It is quite natural that Mr. RELLSTAB, whose youthful predilections were so strongly military, who himself wore the uniform during his first six years of manhood, and who was contemporary, at the age when impressions are strongest, of the gigantic wars waged by Napoleon, in Spain, Germany, and Russia, should recall, with peculiar pleasure, at a later period of his life, the martial deeds with which, in his boyhood, all men's mouths were filled; that he should select them as a subject for his pen, dwell willingly upon their details, and bestow the utmost pains upon their illustration. His original plan of an historical romance was far more comprehensive than the one to which he finally adhered. He proposed employing as a stage for his actors all the European countries, then the theatre of war. This bold plan gave great scope for contrast, allowing him to exhibit his personages, chiefly military men, engaged alternately with the Cossack and the Guerilla—alternately broiling under the sun of Castile, and frozen in Muscovy's snows. But the project was more easily formed than executed; and Mr. RELLSTAB soon found (to use his own words) that he had taken Hercules'club for a plaything. The mass was too ponderous to wield; to interweave the entire military history of so busy a period with the plot of a romance, entailed an army of characters and a series of complications difficult to manage; and that might have ended by wearying the reader. Convinced that his design was too ambitious, he reduced it; limiting himself to the Russian campaign—itself no trifle to grapple with. This plan he successfully carried out. Although well drawn and well-sustained characters are early introduced, and although the reader obtains, in the very first chapter, a mystery to ruminiate, whilst of incident there is certainly an abundance, the real fascination of the book resides in the account of the advance to Moscow, of the conflagration of the city, and the subsequent retreat. The great power and truthfulness with which these events are depicted, convey the impression that the writer was an eye-witness of the scenes he so well describes. As this was not the case, we cannot doubt that Mr. RELLSTAB obtained much information from some who made that terrible campaign. He acknowledges his great obligation to Count Segur's remarkable history.

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND TWELVE:

OR,

NAPOLEON'S INVASION OF RUSSIA.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT sunset on a mild evening of April, in the year 1812, Louis Rosen, a young German, arrived at the small town of Duomo d'Ossola, situate on the sloping side of the Simplon. He was tired, for he had travelled on foot from Baveno on the Lago-Maggiore, that delightful region of gardens, which, at all times, is sheltered by the Alps as by a rampart, from the rough northerly winds. The youthful traveller received the genial impression ; but he came from Italy, the sunny land of indolence and pleasure, which, even while the whole continent was convulsed by the storms of war, had succeeded in maintaining its character of a joyous asylum of the arts. But young Rosen was admonished to seek a speedy return to his country by those momentous events which had thrown the one-half of Europe in arms against the other. His mother and sister lived quiet and retired at Dresden; more, however, from choice than from necessity. Louis had lost his father while yet a child. He knew not in what manner, even, for his mother had occasionally merely touched on the event.

The last four years had been a period so quiet in Northern Germany, that even two lone women had managed to meet the exigencies of their living without a protector. But now the columns of the French armies were again approaching from every point. With the opening of the spring, Germany was again converted into a vast military encampment. For these reasons was Louis returning, for his heart prompted him to fly to his mother's side, and his sister in her letters had informed him that their parent suffered much from a pulmonary complaint. He obeyed this call of duty, though with a heavy heart; not that Italy had irresistibly

fascinated him, but because he dreaded again to tread his native soil, so unfortunate, so degraded, on which he perceived deeper and more incurable wounds than those inflicted by the Frenchman's sword. Louis was of that age which is most susceptible to feelings of happiness and of sorrow. He was three and twenty. His mind was prone to grave and serious thought, for it had matured amidst serious conjunctures. The years commonly allotted to study, which others spent in thoughtless chase after pleasure, or, at the best, in a partial devotion to books, were, in his case, a season of vigorous application. It was now one year since he had beheld his father-land—two that he had not seen his mother and sister, for he had set out on his travels from Heidelberg, where he had spent his last year of study. He now again stood before that snow-covered and gigantic wall, which separates the sober soil of Germany from the sunny fields of laughing Italy. Oh ! how did his heart yearn after everything beloved and honored beyond the Alps ; how tenderly did he stretch forth his arms toward his kindred, toward the sacred precincts of the paternal fireside ! But all that he loved were immersed in trouble and sorrow : all that he honored was profanely debased and insulted ! It was for this that his feet bore him so heavily and reluctantly toward his home, to which, however, his heart so ardently drew him.

With these feelings possessing his breast, he approached the friendly little town, the last place in Italy which was to afford him a shelter. A hill by the roadside invited him to ascend. From the top he looked down upon the landscape, which, as usual in the South, looked more beautiful at the evening-hour. The fields were clothed in the richest verdure, while on the other side of

the mountain-ridge which towered behind the town, the flowers, perhaps, still lay benumbed in their dull winter sleep. To the right Louis had a view of the turnpike for a great distance ; at his left, the market-place and streets of Duomo d'Ossola lay close at his feet. He saw the merry, unconstrained Italian girls, with their wide-brimmed straw-hats, promenading the market-place ; the fruit-woman, with her basket of figs and oranges ranged before her ; boys whirling their balls dexterously into the air ; and some French dragoons, of which the town held a small detachment, sat conversing on a bench before the guard-house. He heard the distant murmur of a medley of voices ; yes, even detached notes from the songs of a guitar-player reached him through the quiet evening air.

Louis stood lost in reverie. Suddenly he was recalled to himself by the horn of a postilion, and the smart crack of a whip struck his ear. An open travelling-carriage, with four fleet horses, came rattling towards the town, on the road from Baveno. Two women were the only occupants. One, the elder, was apparently a domestic. The younger, whose sombre garments were relieved by a delicate lace-work of dazzling whiteness, wore over her straw hat a green travelling-veil, which she just then threw back, so that it fluttered free in the air. This sight awoke vividly a circumstance in Louis' mind. On his way into Italy, as he was descending the great St. Bernard, from Aosta, he had met with a female, whose image had never since left his thoughts. While climbing the mountain, just before arriving at the hospice, a company, seemingly of travelling English, passed him, among whom appeared a slender female figure, upon a mule, and who, as a protection against the blinding whiteness of the snow, had covered her face with her veil.

Animated by a strange excitement, the German youth had done his best to overtake this party, yet he did not succeed, the distance between them being a very rough and impracticable piece of mountain-road. Thus the green floating veil formed alone his beacon over the white snow-fields, until it vanished within the gate of the hospice. He followed within, hoping to become acquainted with the object of his curiosity, in the evening, at table, but in vain, for she did not appear. The next morning, the travellers had resumed their journey, at an early hour. Hardly had Louis heard this, before a singular determination formed itself in his brain. A young, stout pedestrian, like him, must certainly soon overtake a party of travellers encumbered with heavy baggage, es-

specially as the road was descending. In a few hours he had indeed discovered the green veil, in a winding of the valley below. That magical token after which he strained his eyes, was actually seen fluttering in the distance !

After infinite toil, Louis had drawn quite near the travellers—so near that he might have called to them. The road wound again around a sharp projecting rock ; he quickened his pace, so as to reach it in time. But as he passed round the point, he saw a small house, closely embowered in vines, hardly a hundred steps distant, before the door of which were standing two country vehicles adapted for use in these mountain regions. The guide who had been leading the mule of the charming unknown, was just then assisting her to dismount, and an elderly gentleman immediately offered her his arm, to lead her to the *char-a-banc*. Louis hastened forward ; once, if but once, he wished to behold the countenance of that lovely fairy, who, by her magic chain, had drawn him thus far a blind follower. Blessed chance ! He all at once perceived something lying glittering in the road ; it was a bracelet, having a golden clasp. He picked it up, and called aloud : “Stop ! stop !” At the same time, he beckoned with the hand, in token that he had something to say. The guides who had accompanied the travellers, turned round and came towards him, but he hastened past them, towards the veiled lady in the wagon.

“Shall I have the pleasure,” he said to her, in German ; “shall I have the happiness to return to you a lost trinket ?” as he reached her the bracelet.

The young lady cast a look of surprise on the finder, and then on her arm ; she now first discovered her loss.

“It is indeed mine,” she answered. “Accept my best thanks, sir.”

The sound of these words struck upon Louis’ ear in quite a peculiar way ; for, though uttered fluently, and with uncommon sweetness, there was in them that strange intonation which at once betrayed the foreigner. He felt a blush mantling his cheek, and only raised his eye timidly toward the speaker, who, at the moment, threw back her veil. As he beheld that sweet face, the soft brilliancy of the beauty it revealed struck him with astonishment. He felt as if an angel suddenly stood before him ; a sensation of sweet oppression and awe penetrated his breast. A pair of blue eyes, shaded by long eye-lashes, lingered upon him with an expression of innocence and goodness. A friendly smile played upon her lips, and such a mild, noble grace was stamped

on her features, that Louis stood rooted to the spot: In vain he sought for words in reply; to the blush of surprise was added that of embarrassment. As if affected by the reflection of his glowing countenance, a rosy tint spread also over the young lady's cheek; she bowed, in a friendly but tremulous manner. The gentleman by her side took off his hat, and the wagon rattled away. Astonished, Louis followed it with a steady gaze, hardly noticing that a second lady, but older, also having a male companion, occupied the other wagon, and hurried past him. His eye was riveted on the green veil, which he saw floating in the breeze, and becoming gradually lost in the distance. Long did he remain thus standing, till the last trace of the vehicle vanished, and the cloud of dust which it had raised behind it had cleared away. This sweet apparition had never left the young man's imagination. He had searched for it through Italy, but in vain: and now, standing on the threshold of that land of romance, he beheld again, suddenly—unexpectedly—this signal of his longings—his hopes! Scarcely, therefore, had he observed these travellers, than with a beating heart he ran down the hill and gained the open space before the guard-house, just opposite to the inn. He saw the carriage standing at the door, with fresh horses already led out to be harnessed to it. A large circle of idlers had collected round the travellers. An officer, issuing from the guard-house, a paper in his hand, made his way through the crowd and approached the carriage-door: on his appearance the young lady got out and took a few steps to meet him. The officer bowed and addressed her with great courtesy; but his manner, and the deprecating shrug of his shoulders, indicated inability to comply with some wish she had expressed. Louis drew nearer; but as the lady—of whose identity with her he sought he grew each moment more convinced—had her lace turned from him, he made the circuit of the crowd to obtain a sight of her countenance. Heavens, it was herself! Her features were paler and more anxious than at their last meeting, and a tear trembled in her beauteous blue eye. Yielding to an irresistible impulse, Louis approached her, resolved, at the risk of offence, to greet the lovely being whose apparition had gladdened his entrance into the glorious land he now was quitting, and to remind her of the moment of their first meeting and too speedy separation. He was encouraged to this step by beholding her unaccompanied, save by an old servant seated upon the box, and by the elderly woman, to all appearance an attendant, or humble companion. He hastily stepped forward out of the crowd, which had fallen a little back.

As he did so, the lady's glance met his and so sudden and joyful a glow overspread her features, that he could not for an instant doubt her recognition of him. He was about to salute and address her, when, with startling haste, she exclaimed in French, "Here is my brother!" and hurried to meet him. Before Louis, astounded at what he took for an extraordinary mistake, had time to utter a word, she continued in Italian, and in a loud tone, so that all around might hear and understand, "Thank God, brother, you are come at last!" Then, in a rapid whisper, and in German, "I am lost," she said, "if you deny me." With prompt decision, she turned to the officer, took the paper from his hand, and presented it to Louis. "This gentleman would not admit the regularity of our passport because you were not present," said she, reverting to the French language. "See what trouble you give us, dear brother, by your romantic partiality for byways! You are Count Wallersheim," she whispered in German.

Startled and confounded as Louis was by this strange adventure, he retained sufficient presence of mind to understand that it was in his power to render important service to the beautiful woman who stood anxious and tearful before him. Readily taking his cue, his reply was prompt. "Be not uneasy, dear sister," he said, "I will explain to the gentleman."

He turned to the Frenchman, and in order to gain time, and some insight into the circumstances of the case, "I must beg you, sir," he said, "to repeat your objections to our passport. Ladies have little experience in such matters."

"I have now," replied the officer, "not the slightest objection to make. You are set down in the passport as the companion of the countess, your sister, and yet you were not with her. The passport was, consequently, not in order. The countess certainly told me you had left her only for a short time, to ramble on foot, and that you would rejoin her beyond the town; but at frontier places, like Duomo d'Ossola, our orders are so strict that I should have been compelled to detain the young lady till you made your appearance. Rest assured, however, count, that I should have held it my duty to have had you sought upon the road to Sempione, to inform you of the obstacle to your sister's progress. I strongly advise you to remain with the countess so long as you are in this district, or you will inevitably encounter delay and annoyance. Once over the Swiss frontier, you are out of our jurisdiction, and travelling is easier."

Louis stood mute with astonishment, whilst the old servant got off the box,—took from him without observation, the light travelling

pouch that hung on his shoulder,—laid it in the carriage, and asked him if he would be pleased to get in. Scarce conscious of what he said, he gave the officer his hand, and uttered a few polite words. The servant put down the carriage steps,—the gallant Frenchman assisted the lady, who had muffed herself in her veil, to ascend them,—bowed low, and repeated his wishes for their pleasant journey. Louis, almost without knowing what he was about, took his place by the side of the enigmatical fair one, whose duenna had discreetly transferred herself to the opposite seat, and the carriage rattled through the streets of Duomo d'Ossola.

CHAPTER II:

As long as they were passing through the streets of the small town, and inhabited houses stood by the wayside, the veiled one observed a rigid silence, and indeed, with a sign of the hand, checked the first attempt which Louis made to obtain some light into this strange adventure. He was thus for several minutes abandoned to his own conjectures. During that time he framed a possible solution to this riddle. According to all appearances, his companion was an Englishwoman; perhaps the daughter of some man of rank. The new war had served to redouble the hatred and jealousy of the French against all of that nation; she was thence, probably from political causes, obliged to resort to cunning and stratagem, to get out of a country which was in the possession of the enemies of her own, and in which she, perhaps, even, might be looked upon as a fitting hostage, and thus be arrested. The heart of Louis, therefore, beat high from joy, that by a marvellous freak of fortune, he had been singled out to render a signal piece of service to a being, by whose sweet charms he had been so sensibly touched, and by whom he had for so long a time been held in tender and mysterious bondage. He fixed his eyes upon her; she sat trembling perceptibly, and breathing heavily, by his side. Finally the last houses by the road-side had disappeared. The surrounding country opened lonely. A steep and continued declivity obliged the postilion, who left his saddle, to change the rapid into a slow pace, so that the deafening rattling of the coach ceased. It was then that the lovely veiled one, with eager haste, seized Louis's hand, pressed it between her own warmly, and spoke, whispering from an oppressed bosom:

" You are my deliverer! the preserver of what I possess most precious on earth!"

And, as if exhausted by mortal anguish, and from repressing the acutest feelings of her breast, she drew a heart-rending sigh, sank on the bosom of her female companion, and burst into tears.

This elderly companion, although possessing something cold and precise in her aspect and deportment, seemed now also moved. She endeavored to calm the weeping girl; but in a language which Louis did not understand, and could not suppose was English, though imperfectly spoken. The unknown arose, threw back her veil, directed her blue eyes toward Heaven, and folding her hands on her bosom, appeared to offer up a silent thanksgiving. Louis, who also felt himself moved in his inmost heart, did not wish to interrupt the emotion, but sat looking upon her with increasing surprise. She responded with ingenuous frankness: "How shall I be able to recompense you?"

"Recompense?" replied Louis, quickly. "Fate has vouchsafed me, in the most wonderful manner, a happiness of which I never dared to dream, and you speak of recompense! What have I done for you? I know only, that like a goddess you have suddenly appeared to an unknown stranger, and overwhelmed him with untold delight!"

"Oh! you do not know," she answered, "what you have done for me by your ready and courageous action!"

She wished to say more, but was interrupted by the old domestic, who looked back, and spoke some words in a foreign tongue, to which she replied in a language equally unintelligible to Louis. Sometimes he thought it was Spanish; then again, Polish idioms that he had heard. The carriage again rolled away at a smarter pace, and the conversation was cut off. In the meantime, they must soon begin climbing the long ascent of the Simplon, which on the Italian side is by far the steepest. Louis deferred, therefore, his desire for a solution of these mysteries until then.

They soon gained an open platform, where the road turned in such a manner, that they could throw back one more parting glance toward Italy. That fairy land lay before them, glowing in the purple tints of the setting sun; the sombre, forest-clad spurs of the Alps reached wide into the blooming plains; foaming mountain-torrents wound their silvery course through the vallies; the white, shining little market-town stood out in bright relief against the dark back-ground; the far distance was lost in a crimson twilight, which permitted a definite outline no longer to be discerned. "Farewell!" said Louis with emotion. His travelling-companion once more turned her beautiful face, while a soft feeling illumined her features.

Her lips seemed to smile at a tear, which suddenly suffused a humid sparkling over the pellucid crystal of her eye. "Farewell!" she repeated in a sweet-sounding tone, slightly waving her hand. It was a deep-felt, but not a painful adieu.

The road now being so exceedingly steep, that the carriage moved again slowly, the moment had finally arrived when a conversation could be quietly maintained. Louis was on the point of recurring to this singular adventure, when his companion herself, unsolicited, began :

" You must be quite strangely impressed with what has occurred; but the events which at present agitate all countries and nations, often conspire to place individuals in critical positions. Such is my fate. I already gave myself up for lost, and trembled for a more valuable object than my life, when heaven sent you to my deliverance. But are you willing to lend me your assistance still farther?"

" Until I draw my last breath," was the prompt and gallant reply of the German youth.

" Promise nothing," remarked the unknown, " until you know what I have to ask from your generosity. You will have to accompany me yet further in the character of my brother, and as such, to escort me in incessant travelling—even to Germany! And it is not devoid of danger to you!"

Louis repudiated the thought that any danger could lessen his devotion.

" That I knew very well, and was assured of beforehand," said the unknown; " but I have a harder confession yet to make. "I must appear ungrateful to you, and meanly suspicious; for I have to solicit your help, without being allowed to impart my secret, because indeed it is not mine. Others have a more sacred right to it, and I am bound by the most solemn obligations. I dare hardly communicate any more than what you must already have guessed at; that I am not the Countess Wallersheim;—that I am not even a German, cannot have remained doubtful to you."

" But by what name then may I venture to address you? Must circumstances always conspire to keep me in ignorance?" enquired Louis, with concern.

" No, I hope not," answered his companion gently; " and until then, you may call me Sister Bianca, if you choose. This name must for the present content you."

" Sister! Bianca!" Louis repeated after her, and a trembling shudder of delight shot through his heart.

" You *may* not only call me sister," said the lady, coloring slightly, " but you *must* do so, unless you wish to betray me. You will

soon become accustomed to it, as well as to the confidential *thou*, which I must insist upon your using in public when addressing me in German. But I must reveal to you something more touching my situation. You see me here, accompanied only by my old nurse, and an old faithful man-servant—the only ones here who partially know my secret. We could travel free from all danger, if these were the only sharers of this knowledge, but unfortunately, it is already betrayed. Know then that as far as the city of Milan, your place was occupied by another. An outrageous advantage," she continued, blushing deeply, " which this person endeavored to take of my situation, compelled me to use a favorable moment to flee him. I cannot doubt that out of revenge he has turned informer. Hence my haste, my terrible agony in that small town; for every moment the order may arrive to arrest us. I have taken a different route, it is true, from the one first contemplated, made practicable by the indefinite tenor of the passport which reads from Rome, through Florence and Milan to Germany, for properly I ought to have come by the way of Verona; but how easily may that precaution be frustrated! how easily the traitor himself entertain such a thought, and cause us to be pursued on both roads! for there is no third left for me to choose. You know now how much you risk! and I must also tell you, that the crime of which you become an accomplice, would be very severely punished."

" The greatest of all crimes in this case would be cowardice;" said Louis, firmly. I do not know," he added more feelingly, " whether it would not make me happier to suffer in your cause."

Bianca kept silence.

The night now closed in, shrouding all surrounding objects with her darkening curtains. The road became steeper; on either side arose the grotesque and craggy cliffs, while the stream of the Veriola, rushed foaming and fretting below in the abyss. Bianca seemed to be exhausted by travel and the anxiety which she had undergone. She leaned back into the corner of the carriage, and fell into a slumber. The excited feelings of Louis suffered no sleep to approach his eyes. The appalling wonders of the road which he travelled contributed to heighten the restless commotion in his breast, and yet rocks, precipices, and cataracts were reflected in his eye merely as so many indistinct, confused and shifting masses of objects.

The road became wilder and wilder; the Veriola rushed through the rocky chasms as in a rage; rocky walls towered grim and high toward heaven; a few stars only twinkled through the narrow aperture of the pro-

found defile. Suddenly, the road turned a sharp corner, and Louis saw before him a gigantic spectre, which rose in a threatening posture against the wall of rocks. A sound, as of dull distant thunder, at the same time struck his ear.

Bianca, awakened by the noise, cried out in terror : " Merciful heaven ! what is it ? where are we ?"

" It is the waterfall at the entrance of the great gallery," said the old servant, turning around. In the meantime the carriage stopped, and a bright ray of light shone in at the windows. The postilion cracked his whip.

" What does it mean ?" enquired Bianca, anxiously. " Are they going to arrest us here ?"

" This is, if I am not mistaken, the boundary of Lombardy ; on the other side of that small bridge before us, we shall be in Switzerland," answered Louis.

" God be praised !" cried Bianca, drawing a deep breath. " Gracious heaven ! only do not forsake me till then !" she added in a lower voice, lifting her beautiful eyes towards the starry night above.

Two figures, enveloped in grey cloaks, stepped up to the carriage, one holding a lantern in his hand : the high helmets, with horse tails, made them known as French dragoons.

" *Votre passeport, Monsieur,*" was the polite but decided demand.

" The pass, dear brother," said Bianca, gently pressing Louis's arm.

Louis drew the paper from his breast-pocket, and handed it over. However little a discovery here was to be apprehended, yet the consciousness of his situation made his pulse beat quicker. By daylight, an attentive observer would have noticed the uneasiness of his countenance ; he was, as yet, a novice in such adventures.

The officer entered the house with the passport ; in five minutes he returned, giving it back to Louis with the words : " *Votre Serviteur, Monsieur le Comte !*"

" Forward !" cried the old domestic, and the carriage rattled away over the bridge towards the water-fall. The noise was deafening to the ear, and white clouds of spray and mist enveloped the carriage as with a thick mantle. On a sudden all this vanished, and the travellers were immersed in profound darkness ; the thunder of the cataract and the stream was heard only in a dull hollow reverberation.

" Where are we ?" enquired Bianca.

" I believe we are in one of the galleries, through which the road passes."

" This is the gallery of Frissinone," the postilion observed, who plumed himself not a little on his familiarity with the terrors and wonders of the road.

Neither Bianca nor Louis had noticed, that while their eyes were riveted on the waterfall, they had passed through a gap, or rather gate, in the mountain. The carriage proceeded slowly through the cavern, where no ray of light penetrated. Suddenly a half obscure light fell from above ; the travellers looked up in surprise, and saw a few twinkling stars ; which, however, were as suddenly lost to view. They had just passed beneath an opening in the vault, which, in the day-time admits a kind of twilight into these sombre mountain cuttings. In ten minutes they emerged into the free air again.

Bianca drew a deep breath. " God be praised," she said, " I was a little frightened in that dark place ; but of what use is this gloomy vault ?"

" Principally as a protection against the avalanches which mostly fall at these places. It is a gigantic structure, undertaken by that Colossus, whose keen glance saw the importance of this work in affording means of communication between his kingdoms. That, before which twenty generations have quailed in dismay, the bold creative spirit of Napoleon has made a reality, and merely by a nod of the head."

" I look upon him as a prodigy ! but yet I believe that this misanthropic spirit is more terrible in devastation, than powerful in creating," replied Bianca, with a woman's shudder at the warlike events which, by her words, she seemed to have in her thoughts.

" He destroys, only to create anew," rejoined Louis with animation ; " on the lava ejected by the volcano, springs up the richest verdure !"

" And think you not of those whom he has buried under the ashes ?" asked Bianca.

Louis sighed. His soul was deeply affected. Undoubtedly he thought of the buried ones,—he thought of his father-land ; but still he was unable to withhold his admiration of the man before whom all Europe trembled. He had often been tortured by this conflict in his own bosom, and now he was going to meet similar dreadful conflicts in returning to his home, and in witnessing near at hand that vast conflict, the black thunder-clouds of which gathered every day more ominous and pregnant with misery.

" We are born into the world," he said, after a pause, in a subdued voice, " to atone for the guilt of our fathers. The iron car of fate crushes us ; ah ! I know it but too well ! But I do not lay the guilt on the heads of those who execute the sentence pronounced by an inexorable Nemesis. History sits in strict and severe judgment. She judges deeds, not the doers. It is from this that we atone for the misdeeds of our fore-

fathers—but our own likewise; for dare we to exonerate ourselves from cowardly apathy and degeneracy? Germany—oh! let me keep silence, for my heart bleeds at the thought!"

Both were silent; the road inclined somewhat toward the east, and there the gentle moon all at once shone forth, floating in the purest ether between two rugged peaks of the mountain. At the same moment there arose before them, high and prominent, out of the shadow of the lofty mountain-wall, two silvery promontories of snow, like horns, which dazzlingly reflected the light of the moon.

"My God!" whispered Bianca, her bosom heaving with emotion, as she seized the hand of her nurse, and pointed to the snow-pillars.

"That peak to the left is the Sempione," said the loquacious postilion, turning to Bianca's old servant.

At the village Sempione, which appears as if lying close under the snowy peak of the mountain, the atmosphere began to feel sensibly cold. The travellers tarried but a few moments to refresh, for Bianca urged haste. Spring here had not yet commenced, for in a short time they found themselves in the midst of snow-drifts, piled up to a considerable depth. In a few moments the postilion made a halt.

"What is the matter?" asked Louis.

"Hem, signor," was the answer; "this season of the year is not the best; we must be careful; we have had some warm days, and then the avalanches come shooting down like the hawk on the sparrow. I must fire a gun."

On this he pulled out an old rusty musket, and fired it off in the air. The report sounded far and wide through the desert mountains, and a thousand echoes returned the salute; then all was still.

"We'll get along," said the postilion, urging forward his horses.

All were in anxious suspense, for each one pictured in silence the horrors of being buried alive under falling avalanches. In the space of a few moments, all the narratives which are so exciting to youthful fancy, even in the tenderest years, of these terrific manifestations of nature, were passed in review in the memory, and with the same half delicious shudder and awe with which they had once been listened to.

A thundering crash is on a sudden heard from above.

"Dio Santo!" cried the postilion, looking up. But instantly he struck his spurs fiercely into the sides of the horse he rode, flourished his whip, and the carriage flew along like an arrow.

Bianca, in her terror, seized the hand of her nurse. Louis, endeavoring to inspire courage, cried:

"There is no danger; these men know their business well, and are uncommonly careful."

But hardly were these words uttered, when a terrible crash thundered right over the heads of the travellers; it seemed as if the mountain was sinking with them into the bowels of the earth. The horses reared and sprang to one side, so that the carriage was thrown hard on to the edge of the precipice. But the undaunted postilion lost not his presence of mind; with spur and whip he forced the animals forward. The danger of being hurled down the precipice endured but for a second; but they were not yet free from the greater impending ruin; for it thundered and crashed, and bellowed terribly all around them, and suddenly they were enveloped in a sort of white cloud: the ground shook; a powerful concussion of the air threw Louis down from his seat, while Bianca clung in helpless and convulsive anguish around the neck of the nurse. The white cloud quickly became darkened, and was changed as it were into wreaths of black smoke; the next instant, and the carriage was arrested in its course by a dreadful shock, as when a ship strikes the sunken reef; the axle-trees cracked—the women screamed—even Louis could not repress an outcry of terror. Everything suddenly became shrouded in impenetrable darkness. The rolling thunder was heard for a few moments longer; gradually it died away, and then all was silent and dark as the grave.

CHAPTER III.

"THAT was a deliverance out of the lion's mouth!" cried the postilion. "We have reached the gallery in safety."

These words gave new life to the terror-stricken travellers.

"We are not buried!" cried Louis, joyfully."

"The avalanche must have fallen very closely behind us, signor," answered the postilion; "for the icicles and snow-dust has almost blinded me, and you too, I think. But it has cost us one, if not both of the axle-trees; for I felt well enough that we struck hard against the rock. But it was no joke to dash on a full gallop into that narrow hole, and in utter darkness too!"

Louis did not hear the last words of the postilion, for he felt that Bianca was sink-

ing. He received her insensible form in his arms.

"For heaven's sake, sister!" he cried, pressing her gently toward him. "Sister, what aileth thee?"

She answered not; Louis trembled with terror. Had that terrific moment deprived her of life?

Sparks illuminated the darkness. It was the postilion striking fire; by the aid of that fitful light Louis saw Bianca lying, pale and with closed eyes, in his arms, and the nurse, also apparently senseless, had sunk back on the seat of the carriage.

"Light! light!" he cried, hastily.

"Directly, Signor!"

The lantern was lighted, and threw its feeble rays on the gloomy stone caverns of the gallery. The postilion raised the light, saying:

"There is no one hurt, I hope! But, *maldito!* where is the servant?"

Louis now first observed that this man was missing. "We must look for him," he cried, gently depositing on the seat the precious burden he held in his arms.

They found the servant lying senseless, close by the entrance of the gallery. He bled somewhat in the forehead, but the injury was trifling, and he seemed otherwise to be unhurt. The active postilion applied a handful of snow, while Louis was trying to lift and rouse him into consciousness. The old man soon recovered his senses again.

"Where am I?" he asked, more in astonishment than in weakness. Louis did not waste time in answering him, but hastened back to Bianca, with the lantern in his hand. He found her sitting, reclined in the carriage, apparently in a gentle slumber. When the light of the lantern fell on her eyes, she opened them, but closed them as quickly, dazzled by the light, and drew a deep sigh. Louis took her by the hand, and called her by name in a low, tender voice; she then opened her eyes wide, and asked, in an uncertain tone, being still half-enchained by a somnolent influence: "Who is calling me thus?"

"Thy brother, Bianca!" said Louis, gently.

"Brother! brother!" she murmured anxiously, still unconscious, and leaned tremblingly forward against Louis' breast—who pressed her to his heart, and imprinted a gentle kiss on her brow. On this, she rose quickly, looked upon him with timid and astonished eyes: and withdrawing with maidenly modesty from his embrace, she said:

"My God! the swoon—I do not know what I have been doing!"

At the same time her eyes fell upon the

nurse, still sitting in a corner of the carriage, her head thrown back in a state of utter oblivion. An expression of affright swept across her countenance at this sight: she opened her lips with an outcry, but it died away in a heavy-drawn sigh. The fainting woman moved, and pronounced a few unintelligible words; at least they were such to Louis.

"She lives! she lives!" cried Bianca, joyfully, as she embraced the neck of the recumbent invalid, tenderly endeavoring to bring her into an upright posture. "Oh! my Margaret, do you know me?"

Their embrace was so passionate, that Louis could not avoid the conclusion, that a more intimate relation existed between them than that of mistress and servant. But before he could arrive at any definite idea on the subject, Bianca addressed him with the anxious query: "But where is—for heaven's sake—"

Louis divined what she wished to say, and interrupted her by giving the welcome information that the servant had sustained little injury. In the meantime, this latter came up, together with the postilion. Bianca made an impatient gesture towards him; the servant bowed respectfully, and said, with earnestness: "I am very glad that the ladies have received no injury; I, also, happily have escaped."

Bianca's looks betrayed some inward struggling emotion; she seemed to combat some hidden thought, which she with difficulty suppressed giving utterance. The old servant, however, paid no particular attention to her, and said abruptly: "Now, first of all, we must look to see what damage the carriage has received;" on which he snatched up the lantern, and held it up to the axle-trees.

"The carriage is knocked almost into a thousand pieces," reported the postilion, who with Paul, the servant, began examining the wheels. "The ladies will have to get out for a while."

Louis assisted the ladies to descend.

"Will the accident detain us long?" asked Bianca, with anxiety.

"Well, yes, Signora," answered the postilion, respectfully doffing his red woollen cap. "We may drag along to the nearest post-house—perhaps to Brieg; but then there will be one or two days' work for the wheelwright. The off fore-wheel is broke right in two, and the spokes of the wheel scarcely hold together in the nave. The pole, too, is all gone to rack; I won't say anything of the body of the coach; it is bad enough, but don't count. The hind part is not so bad, but the right wheel has suffered some too."

During this lucid description, Bianca cast uneasy looks on her companion and Paul.—The latter at last began : “ It will all come to rights, gracious Countess. I think if smith and wheelwright are well paid, we will escape with the delay of only a few hours. But certainly there is no time to lose.”

“ Yes, friend,” said the postilion, “ all very well ; but in this plight we cannot get along. We must first cut a couple of saplings—one to put under the axletree, and the other to splice the pole with. The mischief, however, is, that we won’t find any trees here that are fit ; for if, on former occasions, I have scanned this place to any purpose, I know that on this height there grows no tree that we can make use of ; here is nothing but crooked, snarled brush-wood ; half an hour’s ride further down, it would do much better.”

“ Let us go there, then,” said Paul ; “ for we must get forward at all events ; the ladies are in a hurry.”

The postilion stood irresolute. Louis thinking, according to the Italian method, first to ascertain how much the postilion was to be paid for this extra service, offered a very handsome reward if he would get the carriage in order again. But the little black-amoor, with the gipsy face, put on a wise look, and said :

“ That is very easily said, but not so easily done. When, at this season of the year, the avalanches begin to fall, there is no security for fifteen minutes together. One of them falling, sets others in motion. Yes, if we had had frosty weather, it would be a different thing. But I smell thaw, and then old Nick can’t trust to anything. It might be very possible that you would have to wait a long time till I came back. By daylight now, one may turn himself about, and towards morning the danger will be over—for what the sun loses by day, with the warmth, falls before morning, and he must then melt off new masses before any can fall again ; but in the night-time the thing is not to be thought of.”

Louis imagined how distressing a delay in their progress would be to Bianca, though the most threatening danger had subsided. He said, therefore, resolutely, “ I will go with you—we will share the danger together.”

“ That would all be very well, Monsignor,” answered the postilion, without altering his dubious looks, “ if we had to deal with a couple of gallows-birds of robbers, lurking behind the bushes ; but the avalanche makes no bones of our being two, or three, or twenty ; it makes a clean sweep with everything in its way !”

“ At least, let us try, my friend,” said Louis, seizing the lantern ; “ I will go before.”

Bianca gave him a look of thanks, which served yet more to fortify him in his purpose.

“ Have you an axe ?” he asked.

“ Axe and rope lie in the chest under the coach-box,” said old Paul, who opened it and took out the axe.

“ Come along, then, my friend,” said Louis, resolutely to the postilion. “ But the servant can remain with the ladies.”

“ Well, then, may St. Borromeus help us !” cried the postilion, between a sigh and a malediction.

Paul stepped up. “ If any one must go, sir Count, it is I ; and you ought to stay behind, to protect the ladies.”

Bianca was hesitating whether to beg of Louis to abandon the hazardous undertaking. Two feelings, of equal but opposing power—duty and sentiment—struggled in her mind. His resolution left her no choice.

“ No, I will go myself,” he said, cheerfully. “ It must be as I have said.”

With these words, he seized the lantern and stepped forward, followed by the postilion.

“ May God protect you, my brother !” Bianca cried after him. The postilion; being better acquainted with the way, took the lantern out of his hand. Hardly had they proceeded fifty steps, when he exclaimed :

“ Saint Borromeo ! I believe the gallery is blocked up ! Look, Signor—the passage is quite choked with snow. The avalanche must have split, and fallen at both ends of the gallery. We are caught like rats in a trap ; for we have seen but too plainly how the door was slammed to behind us.”

It was as the postilion had said. A few steps forward sufficed to convince Louis that the outlet was entirely filled up with snow.

“ What are we to do now ?” he said, shuddering at the idea of being a prisoner in this cavern.

“ What must we do ? We must go back to the ladies ; for here we cannot pass, until we are dug out,” answered the postilion.

“ But will anybody help us ?”

“ Pshaw !—I have no fear of that. The folks in Sempione must be stone-deaf if they have not heard that avalanche. And if I am not back with the horses to-morrow morning, they will seek me out, I’ll warrant.”

Somewhat calmed by this answer, Louis returned to the ladies, and related to them the condition in which they were placed. Bianca listened with anxiety, but resignation ; and, raising her eyes heavenward, she said :

"We must endure what God sends upon us; He alone can order our fate. So let it be. I am prepared for whatever may happen!"

The postilion, who could discover nothing extraordinary in the case, tried to console and cheer her.

"Signora, there is no danger; they will come and deliver us; to-morrow you will be safe and sound in Brieg—that you may rely upon. In the meantime, however, we will try to give them a signal. No doubt we can let in as much air through the snow, that the report of a musket may be heard. On hearing us at the post-house, which can't be far hence, they will ring the alarm-bells, and at day-break there will be people enough here to unearth us."

Having said this, the merry and nimble Italian busied himself directly with taking out the pole of the carriage, with which he intended to pierce a hole through the snow. But while thus occupied, a distant rumbling was heard.

Bianca started in affright. "What is that?" she asked.

"You'll hear directly," said the postilion, assuming the posture of a listener. "There you have it!—didn't I tell you? It is a second avalanche."

The report was repeated two, three times, with increased loudness, one following the other in rapid succession—then followed a long-continued, rattling noise, as of an immense load of stones falling headlong down an abyss; it approached nearer—now it rattled right over the heads of the listeners, as if about to demolish the roof of the gallery. Bianca clung, terrified, to the side of Margaret; even the men betrayed fear. But the postilion laughed as he said: "It can't rain through here!" Gradually the tumult subsided, and was finally lost in a dull roar in the depths below.

"Was I not right?" asked the postilion. "Had not the outlet been closed up against us, we should never have found it again."

Bianca, in a silent prayer, returned thanks to the Almighty that Louis' hazardous enterprise had been frustrated.

In the meantime, the postilion had succeeded in taking out the broken carriage-pole, and, with Paul's assistance, tied a stick over the fracture. Having, in this manner, rendered it serviceable in boring through the loose snow, they both set to work to make an opening somewhat in the shape of a chimney-flue, at that end of the gallery which lay towards the valley. Louis and the women followed them, for the result was of too much importance to them all, to allow them to neglect witnessing the progress of the work. The perforation of this air-hole

was effected by a funnel-like excavation, Paul and the postilion constantly turning and pushing the pole with a narrow circular motion. In a few minutes a considerable mass of snow fell down from the increased opening.

"Ah!" cried the postilion, "we have had engineering and sapping enough; the roof has tumbled in." At the same time he stooped down under the aperture, crying out: "Why, indeed, the moon shines right in through the window!"

Paul brought up the musket.

"We will put in a couple more good waddings on the top," said the postilion, "so that it may give a better sound,"—pulling out, at the same time, some pieces of old, dirty paper, which, after chewing hard together, he rammed down very tight. "Just so," he said; "but now I must be a little elevated, so that I can reach to push the muzzle out into the air, else the shot won't be heard."

He then, without ceremony, let himself be raised on the shoulders of Paul and Louis, and fired off his musket. A loud report filled the vault, which was as plainly repeated, extending far and wide in the mountains.

"Bravo, bravissimo!" cried the postilion, in self-exultation. "But now we must have a *da-capo*, or it will not be understood." He loaded and fired a second and a third time. "Well," said he, "it is now in good train, and we won't be forgotten."

The ladies, with Louis, had, in the meantime, resumed their places inside of the carriage, there patiently to await the coming of day. Shortly they heard the distant sound of a bell. It was the alarm-bell, with which the information that some person is in danger is conveyed from station to station. Their deliverance was therefore secured.

CHAPTER IV.

TOWARDS morning, every eye was closed in slumber, for fatigue had at last overpowered all thought and watchfulness. The report of a gun first interrupted the death-like silence, and awakened the travellers.

"That's the signal of approaching help," cried the postilion, who had taken his seat on the roomy coach-box, by the side of Paul—words that changed Bianca's fright into lively joy. "We must return a prompt answer," he added, seizing the musket to load it. He then proceeded, accompanied by the rest, to the end of the gallery, and fired through the opening.

Directly after the firing, loud cries of men's voices were heard close by the cavern. Before ten minutes had passed, men appeared before the outlet of the gallery, so that those within could converse with them. They soon shovelled out an accessible passage, though the carriage as yet could not be extricated. Thus were the gates of this dismal dungeon finally unbarred. Louis conducted the lady into the open air. With silent rapture both greeted once more the welcome light of day. A deep and quiet valley lay open before them; but the surrounding heights were covered with tall and slender pines, in their green winter-dress; and far away, below, was discovered the friendly little town of Brieg, encircled by the silver thread of the Rhone, and glowing in the midst of green fields, adorned in all the opening charms of spring.

It was now proposed that the ladies should, with young Rosen, go before on foot to the next post-house, two miles distant, and there wait till the carriage could be brought thither. Louis found this proposition quite sensible. He gave his arm to Bianca, and accompanied by Margaret, the *gouvernante*, they set out. In an hour the post-house was reached.

The landlady appeared. The repast called for proved a truly Swiss breakfast. On the tray stood a large coffee-pot, and another with chocolate; fresh butter, honey, preserved fruit, and pastry.

They had not long to wait before the carriage arrived; which, by the assistance of the people who had cleared the road, had been put in tolerable repair. Bianca still insisted on the necessity of flying; and consequently bade her landlady a hasty farewell.

The fugitives now proceeded in a smart trot on the much smoother road; for their new postilion, who had been a witness of the liberal gifts which Paul, in the name of his master, had bestowed upon the men who had afforded assistance, made his calculation likewise upon a handsome douceur. Thus they reached Brieg, in the Canton Valais.

Arrived at the inn, Louis' first care was to get the carriage mended. A smith and a wheewright were sent for; they both declared that at least four hours would be necessary to put it in travelling order.

Bianca would rather have exchanged the carriage for another; but in so small a place, none was to be had. Suspicions, too, might thereby be aroused, proving perhaps more perilous than the delay itself. They had, therefore, to content themselves with stimulating the activity of the mechanics by promises of liberal payment.

Bianca with Margaret took possession of

a room at the inn, and Louis took one adjoining. Paul remained below in the common guest-room, where, being tired, he stretched himself on a bench. His strength seemed nearly exhausted; a few hours' rest were therefore, perhaps, necessary in his case; for he was an aged as well as trustworthy servant.

Louis, though prompted by his inclination, deemed it improper, if not impertinent, to intrude upon the ladies, who certainly had need of repose. Wishing to improve his leisure, by recording the events of the last few hours in his journal, he found, to his great dismay, that he had lost it. He remembered distinctly having had it in his possession just before reaching Brieg, and consequently must have lost it in the house, or within a short distance of the town. All search in his room and inquiries of the landlord, having proved fruitless, he determined to make the not very promising attempt to seek for it on the road. He reached the outskirts of the town without finding it, and went on his way up the high road. With rapid strides he walked on, but found nothing. Already had he given up all hope, when he perceived something red, shining on the grass in the distance; he hastened to the spot, and there indeed lay his lost treasure! He had retraced his steps for some ten or fifteen minutes, when he heard the sound of a horse's hoofs behind him. On looking back, he saw a horseman approaching full gallop; followed by a carriage, attended by another horseman, also coming down at full speed. This sight struck him as something singular. But ere he had time to arrange his surmises in his mind, the foremost rider came up, and called out to him in French:

"Do you belong to Brieg, sir?"

"No," replied Louis, "I am a traveller, and have just rambled out of the town."

"Can you tell us if a carriage and four, with two ladies and a gentleman, and a servant on the box, has arrived there?"

Louis was on the point of answering No, when the post-chaise came up and stopped. It contained a civilian and a French officer. The former leaned out of the window, and repeated the horseman's question. This gave Louis, who could not doubt the inquiries had reference to Bianca, time to devise a safe answer. He remembered that the post-house was at the commencement of the town, and that persons in haste would be likely to change horses there without going to the inn at all. This decided his reply.

"Certainly," said he quickly, "such a carriage arrived some hours ago, with a broken axle, I believe, which was mended here. But about a quarter of an hour back, just as

I left the town, the strangers resumed their journey."

"The devil!" exclaimed the man in the carriage: "Which road did they take?"

"The only one they could take, by Sion to Geneva," replied Louis. "You see it yonder, following the bank of the Rhone."

"Can we not cut across?" inquired the traveller, hastily.

"To be sure," said the postilion, answering for Louis; "just below this we can turn sharp to the left; and if your Excellencies are not afraid to ford the Rhone, even though the water should come into the carriage a little, we avoid the town altogether, and save a good half-hour. If your Excellencies allow me to take that road, never fear but I will overtake the travellers. They must now just be passing through yonder wood, otherwise we should see their carriage on the highway."

"Is the cross-road dangerous?"

"Not a bit; only a little rough. In an hour at most we will catch them, if your Excellencies will bear me harmless for passing the post station."

"That will I," replied the officer in the carriage; "and what is more, you shall have the twenty gold Napoleons I promised you if you caught the fugitives before they reached Brieg. Now on, and at speed."

The carriage dashed forward, the horsemen galloping on either side.

Louis stood nearly petrified; yet there was no choice as to what course to pursue. He hastened back with all possible speed to notify the ladies. With greater speed than the carriage even, he reached the inn, and presented himself in Bianca's room.

"For heaven's sake, what is the matter?" she asked, when she saw how excited and heated he was.

Gasping for breath, he began to relate what had happened.

"Merciful heaven!" she exclaimed, interrupting him, "then we are lost! How did that man look? Had he not black hair and eyes, a pale countenance, and teeth very white?"

"It appeared so to me," answered Louis, "but he was so muffled up that I could not see his face distinctly, and I must confess that I did not bestow any particular attention on his looks, the affair itself put me in such a flutter; but listen farther." He then told them by what combination of circumstances the pursuers had been diverted from the right track.

"God be praised!" cried Bianca, pressing her female companion to her heart with great emotion. "Oh! you are our guardian angel!" she said, kindly, turning around to Louis and holding out her hand. "But we

have not a moment to lose." On which she arose, and rang the bell eagerly for Paul.

"We have at least two hours," said Louis, "before they will perceive their error. The postilion spoke of it taking an hour, and he will be led on and on by an illusive hope, and perhaps even proceed to the next station. In that case, they cannot return before night-fall, and ere that time I will, with God's help, find some way of escape."

Bianca trembled violently; she did not decline the support of Louis' arm as he led her to a seat.

"God has so wonderfully protected us," she said, more calmly; "that even now I put my full trust in Him. You have a second time become our preserver. Without the accident which took you again to the road—an accident which otherwise might have exposed us to the greatest calamities—we should have been unavoidably lost. But the Lord is gracious!"

While saying this, she raised her eyes toward heaven, tears of gratitude and acute suffering commingling.

Paul had entered the room. Margaret took him immediately aside, and spoke some words to him in a low voice, on which the old servant started back, pale and terrified.

"We must away instantly," he cried—"there is no other course. We cannot wait till the carriage is repaired; and if we could it would be useless, as we have no other road to take but the one on which we must meet our pursuers. There is nothing remains for us to do, but to leave the town singly, and on foot, and betake ourselves straight to the mountains. Take, therefore, your most indispensable articles, my lady countess, and with Margaret leave the town immediately. Follow the road along the valley, up the Rhone, on its left bank. Coming here to-day, I observed that a well-beaten path runs along the river, which no doubt it follows up into the valley. In about half an hour from this time, wait for me at any safe point on the river's bank—some place where you can be hid by the bushes, and yet see the road to the town, so that we may not miss one another. I will leave the house in an opposite direction; the Count must leave towards another point still, so that as far as possible it may not be known which way we have taken. When we are all together again, we must find guides to conduct us across the mountains, and perhaps mules can be procured to lighten the journey."

Paul delivered himself of these words with so much gravity and force, that they sounded almost like a command. His counsel was, however, so sound and judicious, that it met at once with implicit obedience. Louis

stood astonished at the cool and discriminating resolution of the old man, and his clear, concise sentences. He seemed to impart his own resolute spirit to his hearers ; for even Bianca, with all her terror, now exhibited an energy truly surprising. She gathered together her papers, her portfolio, and some other trifles, while Margaret picked up the most necessary articles of clothing, packing some in a light work-bag, others in a small basket, and finally concealed a good many things in the high-crowned bonnets used by herself and the Countess. In less than five minutes the two ladies left the room. They were met by the chambermaid in the passage. Bianca took her to a window looking toward Sion, exactly in an opposite direction to that which she intended to take, and pointing to a neighboring hill, she asked :

" How far may it be to the top of that hill ? Do you think we can go there for a walk, and be back before evening ? "

" If the ladies are good pedestrians, it may be done very well ; but it is a good hour's walk," answered the girl.

" Then we won't be back much before dark—perhaps later," said Bianca ; " just see that my room is put in good order."

" Will their ladyships take supper in their room ?" asked the girl.

" Oh, yes ; three covers ; but not till nine o'clock," said Bianca—after which she, with her companion, hastened down the stairs.

Louis Rosen, as may be supposed, was not idle. Within five minutes of the departure of these ladies, he issued forth from the inn, and carelessly whistling a tune, left the house, as if minded to take a stroll through the streets. He looked back on his way, to ascertain if Paul was about, but saw nothing of him. A few steps from the house he was met by the steward of the inn. Him he charged with the commission to Paul to go again to the smith, so that the carriage might be ready before nightfall, for he was determined at all events to set out after supper.

CHAPTER V.

WITH a beating heart, Louis gained the open country, and now looked about to find how to reach the road indicated, without being observed. The cross-path which he turned into, lay right through some gardens, even concealing the Rhone. He walked on impatiently, still finding himself hemmed in

by fences and hedges. At last he came to an open spot, but found himself so far out on the plain that he was unable to set himself right. Half an hour had now elapsed since Bianca had left the house ; every moment, therefore, became more and more precious. He quickened his steps, therefore, and finally gained an eminence, from which he could see the Rhone. What was his mortification when he discovered that he was much farther from the river than when he set out ; it even seemed most advisable to go straight back again. The Rhone just above Brieg trends an angle so acute as almost to give it a retrograde course. Louis, who had planned his route according to the original course of the stream, now beheld that part of the bank forming the rendezvous far away behind him.

The most advisable plan now appeared to him, to go direct towards the river, and to follow its downward course, in which case he must fall in with the wanderers. He hastened on as fast as his powers permitted. Still a full half hour went by without his reaching the margin of the river ; for frequent gullies, hollows and marshy places compelled him to take a very round-about course. The sun had already sunk behind the lofty wall of the Alpine ridge, and the deep valley of Brieg began to sink into the blue shades of evening. Now he heard the murmur of the Rhone. He had a few rocky eminences, overgrown with brambles and blackberry-vines, yet to overcome, and then he hoped to find the river-path. Invigorated by the thought, he climbed resolutely upwards. The eminence was steep and high—long, intertwined and tangled tendrils of the blackberry covered the ground, like snares, and with their sharp, long prickles tore his boots and wounded his feet. He finally conquered these obstacles, and found himself on the summit. Passing quickly across the ridge, he prepared for his descent on the other side ; but he was suddenly arrested in his career, for he stood on the edge of a precipice, the impetuous waters of the Rhone dashing along its base. Nothing was left but to turn back, and follow the ridge down the stream. He was unable, to his great annoyance, to discover any trodden path ; there was no choice, indeed, but to follow the river on the steep ridge of the bank, overgrown with thick bushes. Much to his comfort, he soon found the ground better, and suddenly it opened upon a wide, well-trodden track. This certainly must be the path which Paul had spoken of. Louis pursued it, therefore, with renewed vigor. Suddenly he discerned, through the increasing dusk, two figures moving in the nearest bushes, perhaps at a hundred paces distant.

They were women, wearing high travelling bonnets, and he saw a white garment. "It is herself!" said his leaping heart, raised to delirious joy. As he came near, he saw that they were engaged in deep discourse, their looks turned upwards to the snow-capped mountain peaks, which, now that the sun had set, shot up, cold and corpse-like, against the dark horizon. Paul was not with the ladies, and their demeanor altogether denoted perfect indifference. This troubled Louis considerably. Now they turned round, their attention being aroused by his eager approach. Heavens! he saw that he was entirely deceived—they were strangers!

There he stood, paralysed; with difficulty he summoned force to make an inquiry. One denied having seen any person, but the other reminded her that about an hour before they had observed, at some distance, in their walk through the valley farther up, two ladies in company with a man, taking the way towards the Rhone. Louis hastily returned thanks for the information, and, happy in having obtained some clue, and to know which way to go, he turned precipitately back on his course facing the foaming stream. The agony of haste lent him wings. He soon regained the spot from whence he had set out, and then indefatigably pursued the river-path. But it was now perfectly dark in this hollow, bordered on both sides by the high wall of the Alps, and there was no hope of having the light of the moon for an hour to come. He was surrounded by gloomy darkness; the country became more wild and rugged; crags and masses of rock still more steep and colossal towered over his head; the pinnacles of the snow-peaks shone high above the black heights. The Rhone thundered close by him, its waves crested with foam. The bank now ran perpendicular, and soon the rocks hung threatening over the abyss. Louis was aware that he stood on the same spot he arrived at upon first gaining the stream. The path stole along under the projecting rocks. Perhaps, at the very moment that he had been standing there, hearing nothing beside the rushing waters, Bianca had passed by underneath. The path became very laborious, even dangerous, in that utter darkness of night; for now it clambered straight up the steep, rocky parapet, and now again it led downwards, equally abrupt. Louis almost rejoiced on account of these dangers, in the hope that it would so retard Bianca's progress that he must soon overtake her. With fresh vigor he pressed onward.

Another hour's exertion, and he saw a light glimmering before him; a cottage was near by, the first human habitation he had

seen on this road. A sweet prophetic voice whispered him that there would he find the object of his pursuit, for it was impossible for her tender feet to have carried her any farther. Quickly he advanced towards the friendly beacon, and in a few moments he stood before the house. He knocked.

"Who's there?" was heard, in a rough, nasal voice, while two wooden clogs clattered in slow measure over the floor.

"A traveller, who has lost his way," answered Louis.

"Very well, friend; I will open the door in a minute," was the reply from within.

The bolt was slowly drawn, and an old man, with hair and beard of silvery whiteness, seen in the uncertain light of a kindled faggot of pitch-pine, stood in the opening.

"Have you no other guests with you, good father?" asked Louis.

"Not a soul," answered the old man. "Who should come to see a poor old man here in the wilderness? I am not even afraid of *bad* guests, for nothing is to be found here to tempt a covetous mind. But, who may you be, dear sir; and how came you this way so late in the night?"

It required some moments for Louis, almost overwhelmed at the failure of all his hopes, to give a reply.

"I lost my way in the mountains. I am separated from my companions, concerning whose fate I am in great anxiety. They wished to ascend the valley from Brieg—I followed after, and without finding the least trace of them have finally gained this, the first human dwelling in my way."

"Yes, yes," answered the old man; "the main-path in the valley runs along the bank of the Rhone, but, in the dark, you probably did not see the log-bridge which crosses the water. This path terminates here."

"Can you not put me in the right road, good father?" cried Louis, eagerly. "I will richly reward you."

"To-morrow morning, with great pleasure," replied the old man; "but to-night my old, weak limbs cannot serve me; for in the dark the track is dangerous, even to hunters, who are acquainted with it."

Louis, tired as he was, would gladly have wandered the whole night; but a look at the feeble, trembling old man, convinced him that he would ask an impossibility, were he to persuade him to follow him now. He accepted the hospitable invitation given him to pass the night in the hut, and followed the friendly host into the small, narrow room, dimly lighted by the burning stick of pine wood.

"I am sorry that my son is not at home," said the old man; "he would do you better service. But he is gone to his cousin's wedding, at Sion, and will not be back until

to-morrow night. So, you see, we must manage the best way we can by ourselves."

"Dear father," said Louis, "I only stand in need of rest, and that would flee from me, even had I here the most sumptuous couch. The only thing which I have to request of you is, that we set out bright and early to-morrow."

"So we will," said the old peasant; "for the moon rises at three o'clock, and will give us light; but now, be pleased to accept of a piece of brown bread and Alp-cheese, and I can give you a drink of milk also. This morning I had a drop of wine left, but, to tell the truth, I drank it myself."

Louis partook of the simple meal with the old man. It would have relished excellently, had not his heart been filled with so much painful anxiety. But rest and food would give him new strength, and with that fresh hope also. The bed, therefore, of fragrant mountain-grass, which the good old man had prepared for him, was highly welcomed; and he quickly sank into a sleep, which, though disturbed by harassing dreams, yet prepared his body for the new and toilsome wanderings that awaited him.

CHAPTER VI.

"It is time, dear sir; the moon is just over the horn of the Simplon, and shines down in the valley. If you are in a hurry, we ought to be on the way."

Louis, yet half-dreaming, heard the old man's words. He could not recollect where he was; for, instead of his eyes being greeted with the merry sunshine of Italy, he opened them upon an obscure, narrow chamber, where the moon was engaged in strange rivalry with the lurid light emitted by a kindled faggot. It was not till the old man reached him his hand, to assist him to gain an upright position, and the full-orbed moon shone right into his face through the small casement of the hut, that he fully recovered his consciousness, and responded to the friendly summons by saying:

"Directly, good father; I was half dreaming—directly."

With these words he sprang up, and in a few moments was equipped for the journey.

"Will you not take something for breakfast?" asked his aged host; "I have warmed some milk. The morning air is sharp. A warm drink is always beneficial, be it ever so little."

Louis was much affected with the simple-hearted manner of the old man, and accepted the proffered breakfast with pleasure.

The old man did not fasten the door on their departure.

"No one seeks anything here," he said; "only at night, when we are at home, we draw the bolt, that no wild beast may push its way in; for there are terribly ferocious wolves in these mountains."

Their path was lighted sufficiently by the moon, and soon the day began to break.

After having travelled some two hours, the old man said:

"You see, sir, there is the bridge over the Rhone."

Louis saw at some distance two long trunks of trees, without railings, placed across the stream. He now recognised the spot by some singularly-shaped boulders which had attracted his attention before, but he had not observed the bridge of logs. That a path turned off here, could not at all have been discovered; for as he came nearer he found that the track leading to the bridge turned off sharp to the right.

Louis was about asking his conductor if he was certain that the path on the opposite bank of the river was the only one which the wanderers could take, when an object fixed his eye, which filled him with joyful surprise. Just at the turn leading down to the Rhone, he saw on the branch of a tree a rose-colored ribbon fluttering in the wind. An exulting start thrilled through his frame; he hastened to the bush, and found, with untold delight, a small piece of Bianca's dress tied to it. Snatching the relic from the tree, he thrust it into his pocket-book for safe keeping. He now proceeded on his way cheerfully. But on reaching the other end of the log-bridge, which led them over the foaming billows of the Rhone, the old man asked him:

"Whereto shall I conduct you now, dear sir?"

"Of course, along the valley; I thought there was only one way," answered Louis.

"That is very true," replied the old man; "but you told me yesterday that your friend intended to pass over the mountains further into the Swiss territory. In that case, we have a wide scope for choosing; for a good many paths take us across the Alps into Upper Bern. The question is, which do you select?"

Louis stood still, in perplexity. Suddenly the thought struck him, that more guide-tokens would appear.

"Let us go on," he said; "only give me notice when we come to any branching-path. I will then make up my mind which way to go."

They soon came to a road, practicable for

mountain-cars and mules. Louis was chiefly concerned about hastening his progress, but the old man could not increase his accustomed slow pace. Indeed, after a while, the old man himself said :

" My dear sir, I see very well how it is—you would be glad to get on faster than I am able. Had you not better take a younger guide ? We shall presently reach a farmhouse, where I am acquainted, and where I can readily procure you a guide, who is well acquainted with the road, both to Bern and Zurich."

Louis, who only from kindness towards his honest companion had hitherto refrained from making the proposal himself, gladly closed with the offer, and replied :

" It shall not be any the worse for you, good father; but I must positively find my friends to-day—"

" Look, there comes my Joseph himself !" interrupted the old man, with a joyous exclamation, pointing to a young man who approached them on the road. " Heh ! Seppi !" he called out to him, while yet at a distance ; " wilt thou guide the gentleman ? He wants to cross the mountain."

" Willingly," answered the lad, in his rough, strong voice.

Louis bade the old man a hearty farewell, and rewarded him so munificently that he burst into expressions of gratitude, that were not likely to have ceased had not Louis cut them short by continuing his march. His first business was to interrogate his new conductor upon the subject of his missing friends. But this time, also, it was without avail, for Joseph had not met with them.

" Heh, sir," said the boy, in his replies, " It is, indeed, a hard matter to search for somebody, when we do not know which way he is gone ; for here we may take a good many different paths. If we go over the mountains by Naters, there below, we can pass by the ' Jungfrau,' into the upper country. That would be the nearest way to Bern : but it is, at this season, too dangerous, and, I don't believe that any one of the chamois hunters would easily undertake it. By Weseh, about three hours' walk farther up, a path leads over the crest of the mountain. We would then leave the ' Jungfrau' to the left ; and might, by the mercy of God, get to Grindelwald. But this, also, is a road which may be travelled in summer time, but not now. There is another road, up the Maienwand to the Grimsel,—or, if we would positively keep in the valley of the Rhone, we would have to cross the Furka to Realp Hospital, and then down the St. Gothard's road. These are the four principal roads ; but any one who is fond of clambering and climbing—of straying about, and does not

mind going a round-about way, may take a great many other smaller paths. But, we country-people are not acquainted with these creep-holes and by-ways. To travel these, a smart hunter of the mountains is necessary ; one who roams about among them, by day and by night. Now, in the spring of the year, dear sir, when the snow is yet very deep, and avalanches are frequent, no one ventures through these paths. I therefore believe, that your friends have taken the road either over the Grimsel, or across the Furka ; and if they're in haste, the last-mentioned is the best—for it brings one quickest on the high-road to Altorf, and then, by way of Brunnen and Zug to Zurich. There is hardly any nearer way to go to Germany. The others are more direct, it is true ; but are not, therefore, the nearest, because they are so dangerous. And should we be overtaken by bad weather, we might have to lay by for a week in the mountains."

Louis listened to this not very cheering description. He determined to proceed up the valley, as far as Maienwand, at the same time having every by-path pointed out to him, in order to ascertain whether Bianca had not left some other token behind her.

In a short time they arrived at the little place called Naters, where, in all likelihood, Bianca had passed the night. Louis made strict enquiries, but no one could give him the slightest intelligence. As they came out of the hamlet to the spot where the path branched off into the mountains, he looked around, in vain, for some fluttering signal—not a trace of which was to be seen.

It was yet early forenoon when he arrived over Morill at Weseh, where he allowed himself barely time for refreshment. He continued his route, under increasing anxiety and sorrow. The last inhabited place which he found, was Urlichen. It was three o'clock in the afternoon, when he arrived there. Twelve hours had he now been wandering, and the road had often been very difficult and toilsome. It seemed to him incomprehensible that he had discovered no trace of Bianca. Even by using the greatest speed, she could hardly have proceeded any farther. Yes ; even supposing that she had continued her flight through the night, she must have made the latter part of the way in broad daylight, when the appearance of lady travellers at so early a season of the year must excite much attention, and could by no means have passed unnoticed. Louis almost began to apprehend, that in order to escape the steps of her pursuer, she had ventured to choose one of the more dangerous paths of the mountains ; and he had thus to combat, not only the pain of separation, but the fears arising from the many dangers to

which she might be exposed. His last and only hope now was, that on coming to the Maienwand, where the steep path winds up to the Hospice on the Grimsel, he would find some token awaiting him, inviting him to take that road, or else to continue the other over the Gothard. His exhausted powers, however, did not allow him to pursue his journey on foot ; he commissioned Joseph, therefore, to hire two mules, the youth having already informed him that these were to be had in the place. After half an hour's delay, Joseph appeared with two well-saddled mules, and a muleteer also—for Louis did not wish to part with his cheerful companion. They mounted their beasts, and continued the journey. The Maienwand was soon reached. Louis gazed at every shrub, every tree and bush, with the most anxious solicitude ; but no rosy tint revealed itself among the, as yet, closed petals and buds of the shrubs in his way.

It was now plain that if Bianca were yet in advance, she must have taken the road over the Gothard. Louis now entered upon the lonely wilderness ;—only a few shepherds' huts, or cabins, now abandoned, were to be seen throughout the snow-covered valley. At the left of the wanderers towered the glaciers of the Rhone, glittering in the sunshine with a thousand variegations. On their right arose immense walls of rock ; and before them the two snow-pyramids of the Furka lifted their heads in the pure airy regions of blue ether. This valley may be compared to the portals of an eternally frozen, glittering winter-palace, on whose diamond pavement no green blade ever springs, and where the warm sun-beam is shivered into its seven chilly colors of refraction.

Silently following his guide, Louis rode on. As they reached the high snowy defile, through which the road is pointed out by long poles, as land-marks, stuck into the snow—and as they were in the midst of the freezing cold, at the foot of the two high and sharp conical rocks, between which the famous road is formed, Louis turned to look back once more. The sun had already inclined towards the mountains, throwing his beams alone on the blue misty heights.

"Let us haste," said Louis to the muleteer, wheeling about his animal.

"Yes, and we must be smart, too," answered the lad, "if we would reach Ander Matt before night-fall. It is very possible that we may have to take up quarters with the Capuchins in Realp."

At an early hour they were in Realp, where they stopped a few minutes with the Capuchins, who live in a small hut, and by whom they were hospitably entertained with

bread, honey, milk, cheese, and wine. This hospitality is bestowed gratuitously ; what the traveller chooses to pay, is his voluntary gift; and the worthy pater, who spends his days in this unbroken solitude, receives it in the name of the convent, as a donation to the poor. On Louis' enquiries after Bianca, he was informed that on the 17th of October, the last traveller had passed this way, in confirmation of which, the monk placed before him the "Stranger's Register" of the last year. Thus was the last hope of the young man broken. He drew a deep sigh—strode painfully to suppress his rising tears, and arose to go.

"Our Heavenly Father comfort and bless you," said the monk ; "you appear to be in trouble!" With that, he kindly held out his hand : Louis pressed it in silence, and hastily left the narrow coil.

Buried in thought, Louis rode on. They were now in the lonely valley called Urser, on the summit of the Gothard, which, in summer, resembles a green meadow-brook, flowing between banks of snow, but now was arrayed as for burial in the white shroud of stern winter.

Gradually it grew darker. There arose a keen and violent wind, tossing the snow-flakes high in mid-air. The cold increased. Louis now began sensibly to feel the effects of fatigue ; the body claimed its repose. He observed, with a kind of self-reproach and vexation, that the attainment of a shelter and a comfortable bed had insensibly become an object of ardent desire.

From time to time a glimpse of light, proceeding from the windows of some dwelling, guided them like a twinkling star through the chilly mist, which sunk down upon the valley. At length they reached houses, and in a few minutes more they came to a halt before an imposing looking building, the lower story of which was entirely illuminated.

CHAPTER VII.

"God be praised," exclaimed Joseph, "that we are here at last ! It was no trifle of a day's-work. I am none of the weakest, but we have travelled a good piece of road to-day !"

The muleteer assisted Louis to dismount. An officious waiter had already hastened to offer the same service, and invite him into the comfortable, well-warmed guest-room, where other travellers, also just arrived, were sitting at supper.

To find himself suddenly within a comfortable room, to join once more in the cheerful circle of social life, produced in Louis' breast the liveliest impressions. He looked about, and saw a comfortable apartment; along which was laid out a well-furnished table, whereon a number of wax-lights were burning. At the upper end of it, next to the stove, sat three travellers, to whom supper had just been served.

"The gentlemen are already at table," said the butler. "Will you please, sir, to sit down and partake with them, or do you wish to retire to a room first?"

Louis, having no dressing-case or other matters to embarrass him, drew near to the strangers, and bowed to them as he was about taking a place at the table. They returned his salute with so much courtesy that he felt himself quite agreeably impressed. He bestowed a closer scrutiny on the guests. From their dress and bronzed countenances they seemed to be *militaires*; they had addressed him in French, but something which he observed in their manners seemed to betray another nation. Two of them, the elder perhaps thirty-six, and the younger about twenty, possessed short black hair and black whiskers; the third, light hair, falling in curls, and a florid complexion. Louis sat down, and, mastering his dejection, endeavored to reciprocate the frank civility of the strangers.

"May I ask if you are from Italy, gentlemen, or are you on your way thither?" he politely inquired.

"Our way," answered the oldest, whose large figure and noble countenance gave him a most commanding appearance, "our way will probably lead us far to the north; but we shall previously visit Germany—go to Dresden, where the Emperor of the French is expected about this time."

"It seems, then, that the war is certain?" Louis remarked.

"We hope so," said the stranger, in a tone that expressed something beyond the common pleasure of a soldier.

Louis kept silence. It grieved his German heart to hear of his country being again overrun by hordes of foreign soldiers; and yet the irresistible verdict of truth told him that Germany had merited her degrading position, and that however gallant the stranger's yoke might be—however grievous to be necessitated, implicitly and unconditionally, to join the conqueror and subserve his schemes of colossal ambition, yet was it far more honorable to the people than being made a prey to the disgraceful, wretched, and selfish policy by which, and especially since the death of the great Frederic, for a century Germany had been so shamefully

oppressed by her own princes. The three words of the stranger, "We hope so," so powerfully awakened the contest within his own breast, and portrayed the truth in such vivid colorings, that the painful apprehensions which occupied his mind were momentarily expelled.

The stranger seemed to penetrate the emotion by which Louis was agitated. After a few moments' silence he answered with dignity, and in the German language: "You are surprised, sir, to hear me say of what, in all probability, will prove a desolating and cruel war, 'We hope so.' It affects you the more from your being a German. By a long sojourn, we have become half Germanized ourselves. Permit us, therefore, to use the language of your country. Perhaps to you it appears criminal that we long for a change in the affairs of the world to which one-half of Europe looks with apprehension and sorrow. It is, indeed, a hard fate, to be placed in a situation where one can hope to preserve one's most precious blessings only through a great and universal calamity; but we find ourselves precisely in such an extremity."

He paused a moment, as if rendered silent by emotion. His noble features seemed to reflect the lofty melancholy of his soul; a dark cloud of brooding anxiety settled on his brow; he gazed vacantly, like one in a dream, and as though the grave and weighty reflections which pervaded his agitated bosom were far removed from the exterior world around him.

An indescribable feeling kindled in Louis' breast; he ventured not to break the solemn stillness. The two younger companions of the stranger also kept silence, their mournful looks fixed on his countenance.

"We are Poles, sir," he said after a long pause. "We hope that the coming struggle will procure us a country—a home; for now we are exiles, roaming about, houseless and forsaken. You will now understand why I dared to say, 'We hope for war!'"

Louis became so disturbed that he knew not what to reply; the stranger saved him the trouble, by taking up the filled wine-glass beside his plate, saying, "'Our Country!' Every brave man must drink this toast, be his nation what it may."

Louis touched the glass with his own; the rest joined in the sentiment.

Apparently in dispatching this glass of wine, the stranger had also dismissed his sombre mood. "We are travellers," he said; "who in extraordinary times have met in an extraordinary place. In the rocky dells and caverns of the St. Gothard, spring up the fountains which send forth their streams to the four quarters of Europe—into Germany.

into France, into Italy. On the other hand, the roads of these countries centre at this point, and intertwine with each other in a mutual bond. We stand, as it were, on the cross-roads of the Continent. To-morrow, one follows the Rhine or the Reuss, another the Tessino, and a third the Rhone. The moment of union should be enjoyed—laid up in sweet and joyful memorial; for who can tell if we may ever meet again? "We three," he went on, turning to Louis, "know each other; we are countrymen and fellow-soldiers. You will remain a stranger to us, and we to you, if we do not allow a frank confidence to rule the hour; a happy hour, which, perhaps, all of us would hereafter gladly look back upon. I propose, therefore, that we exchange names. Mine is Stephen Rasinski; I am a colonel in the army of the Emperor; these gentlemen, my young friends and comrades, are officers in the same regiment, Count Boleslaus, and Count Jaromir; and you, sir?"

"My name is Louis Rosen; I am a German," replied Louis.

"Welcome, then! Rosen is a pretty name. Happy he for whom roses bloom, even if they were only Alp roses. That time is gone by with me; for when close upon forty, one dares no longer think on blossoms, and may at the best expect nothing but a little late fruit. Well, I have seen blossoms also, and have seen them droop and die! Here's to the development of those blossoms—youth! hope! love! Come, my young friends, this toast concerns you, more than me!"

Louis responded to the call with peculiar emotion. Rasinski's toast affected his heart painfully, while it called forth a faint ray of hope.

The conversation was continued on other subjects. Count Rasinski seemed designedly to avoid a return to the grave subjects which he had at first introduced, and the young officers paid a modest deference to his wish. They talked about Italy, about Paris, of the talents of Napoleon as a general and a statesman—of his march over the great St. Bernard, which was so near them—of the gigantic preparations for the impending war—of the bold plans of his active mind, generally, which led the French standards from the pyramids to the Tagus, from the Tagus to the snow-fields of Russia; in short, they spoke of every thing which then riveted the attention of every thinking mind in Europe.

An hour passed thus imperceptibly; supper ended, and every one sought repose.

Excited by his tumultuous thoughts and feelings, Louis, notwithstanding the great fatigues of the day, could not at once go to sleep, but lay thinking on his bed what he

should do on the coming day. Should he go forward, or return? Should he attempt to search for Bianca on another road, or should he pursue the nearest route into Germany? It had not escaped his observation that the Poles were bound for the same point with himself; and in the first moment, he came near betraying his satisfaction; but now he was glad that he had restrained himself and kept silence; for by such a companionship, he might deprive himself of the liberty of pursuing his search. He determined, therefore, to part as soon as possible with his new acquaintances, and without disclosing too much of his object.

In the midst of these thoughts, he finally fell sound asleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was broad day when Louis was awakened by a slight knocking at his door. On saying "Come in," the youngest of the three officers, the blond-haired Count Jaromir, made his entrée.

"Excuse me," he said, "that I disturb you thus early; but it would afford us all so much pleasure to travel in your company that I have been commissioned by my comrades to ask you about it; a task which I cheerfully fulfil."

Louis apologised for his drowsiness and promised to rise immediately and join them in the breakfast-room. In a few minutes he did so. The officers greeted him cordially. Rasinsky declared that they could not possibly make up their minds to set out before him, and leave him to go through the famous St. Gothard alone.

"Two persons," said he, "who once cross together the Devil's bridge, should become, through recollection of thefeat, linked together for life."

Louis acknowledged the truth of this, thanked the count very warmly, and accepted his offer.

Mules were saddled; the guides stood in readiness. The travellers from the excellent inn of "The Three Kings," at Ander Matt, rode down the valley towards its blackened gates. As on the Simplon, here opened a gloomy cavern, called the loch of Urn; as there, the river rushes close by; as there, light was momentarily admitted into the interior of the cavern through a large oval grating; and the Reuss, like a white ghost, was seen tossing and foaming on its course. The tumult of the stream deafened every ear. The cleft opened, and there they stood in the

narrow passage, enclosed by towering rocks, where the raging Reuss plunges headlong into the abyss, threatening to demolish every barrier, even the boundaries of its own banks. Across this seething cauldron, the narrow bridge is thrown, and with such dexterous boldness, that the old legend seems quite in its place, which says :

"It was not built by human hand,
For none would dare."

The bridge creaks and trembles as the travellers pass. Count Rasinsky halted a moment, looked up into the rocky cleft above him, and then into the foaming chasm below. He wishes to speak, but the noise of the tumbling waters deaden all human sound. And yet there reigns here the sombre feeling of an eternal solitude ; for no bird flits, no insect creeps, no grass, no poor tiny spire of moss is seen : naked and immovable masses of granite alone rise steep and rugged into the blue heavens.

For the space of an hour they rode over the so-called "Schullen," on broad flags of stone, smooth and bare. Over the nearest huge and broken rocks towered the snow-covered peaks of the Alps, now shrouded in a grey mantle of clouds. Had it been less early in the season, the valley would have been more cheerful. As it was, winter held here a much more rigorous sway, than on the Simplon, the snow covering the tops of the rocks, and even the topmost boughs of the black fir-trees, which gradually became more frequent. By and by the eminences became clothed with under-wood, and a few blades of grass might be here and there discovered, peeping forth from their slight covering of snow.

At an early hour they arrived at the village of Amsteg, where the Schächenthal, among rugged clefts and crags, branches off from the valley of the Reuss. Here the travellers took breakfast, and then continued their road to Altorf, winding through broad green valleys and fresh meadows : the Reuss here changes its character to the gentlest and most peaceful of streams.

Louis' companions expressed a wish to take to the water on the lake of Vierwaldstatten, and hastened on, therefore, so as to reach Fluelen, and from thence, if possible, Lucerne before night. But as the last hope which Louis cherished of finding Bianca was on the nearest high-road to Germany, he resolved to pursue his journey over Zurich to Schaffhausen.

They bid each other a cordial farewell, promising themselves a happy meeting in Dresden.

It was not without grief that Louis saw his newly acquired friends depart ; for it was

quite uncertain whether he would find them again. The war drove everything before it.

There happened to be a pedlar at the tavern, in Altorf, who, with his empty wagon, was about returning to Zurich. Louis now dismissed Joseph, secured a seat, and set out immediately. Without accident, he arrived in Zug late at night, and by noon of the following day, having passed over the Alphis, reached Zurich. This was a point which Bianca must touch. He had arrived with so little delay, that he could not doubt having gained Zurich before her. He resolved, therefore, to rest this and the following day, and, meantime, push his enquiries. He did so ; but in vain. He even allowed himself a third day. When even this last brought no trace, he was compelled to set out. A few days brought him to Heidelberg over Schaffhausen and Freiburg.

It was on one of the early days of May that Louis Rosen entered the charming city where he had spent so many happy hours. He trod again its streets,—but in sorrow. His College-friends had left the place at the same time with himself. A single year had taken to flight, and within that short space, what a change !

Sorrowful and disturbed, Louis resolved to pursue at once his route home. He entered a well-known saloon, for dinner, where he found the guests, a few strangers, and some unmarried professors, belonging to the University of Heidelberg. One of them held a newspaper in his hand—from which he seemed to impart to the company some important intelligence, about the approaching campaign.

"What news, sir ?" asked Louis, without feeling any particular interest in the question.

"As far as the war is concerned, nothing definite, yet," answered one who sat near his elbow. "Marching of troops—notices of the arrival and departure of Generals—long accounts of the great preparations of the French emperor ; in short, everything we have heard repeated every day, for weeks past. But just read this advertisement ; it is, just now, the topic of our conversation."

Louis threw an indifferent look on the paper ; but, scarcely had he glanced over the first lines, than he became strangely agitated.

The words which had excited the wonder and curiosity of the company, and which roused so violent a commotion in Louis' breast, ran thus :

"To THE UNKNOWN FRIEND !

"Imperishable thanks to him, who became a preserver in most imminent peril—who hailed the stranger as a *sister*—who guided and protected her, with the fidelity of

a brother ! If voluntarily he tore asunder those bonds, as suddenly as a higher power had formed them, let him know that his name is still respected ; that mournful gratitude alone fills the heart. Should the inscrutable changes of human events ever bring him again into the path of the now far distant mourner, he shall find a true sister, who gladly will offer him any sacrifice, because she has to thank him for all ! ”

“ B—.”

“ Well, what say you to that ? ” asked the man, of Louis, whose eyes seemed riveted upon the precious lines.

“ Singular, indeed ! very singular ! ” he answered hastily, endeavoring to quell his emotion. “ I find the letter so touching,” he continued, with a forced smile, “ it awakens a thousand conjectures. But, I always was a romantic dreamer ! ”

CHAPTER IX.

“ Well, now, dear mother, everything is in order,” said Mary, her eyes glistening with joy, and a quiet smile playing on her mild countenance, as she entered the room, and laid a key on the table, by which her mother sat sewing. “ Now, he may come any moment he likes ; he will find everything ready for him.”

“ Have you put the books into the book-case, too ? ” asked the mother.

“ I have not forgotten the least thing,” replied Mary ; “ and if he is still the same brother—if his tastes have not entirely changed—he will certainly be pleased with his room. Everything has happened so luckily ;—that we should directly find a house, where there is room for all of us, and which so well answers our wants ! But I can hardly wait for the hour when he will arrive : my heart has such a longing to beat against his true, honest breast ! But, dear mother, you do not seem to be glad enough ! Have you any trouble ? any doubt ? ”

On saying this, Mary tenderly put her arm round her mother’s neck. The mother looked, with emotion, into the face of her daughter, radiant with gladdening hope ; and pressing her tenderly to her bosom, said :

“ None Mary, none but those which always fill a mother’s breast. We have not seen Louis now for two years. He has been far around in the world,—has seen it in its most dazzling aspects : will his heart, always proud and fiery, be content with our domestic condition ? Will he look upon the path which lies before him, with a cheerful eye ? ”

If you do not behold one feeling the unalloyed pleasure you experience yourself, do not attribute it to lack of affection, but to a feeling more deep, and, therefore, more anxious. Because thy own young and untutored heart knows no other world than our narrow circle, and the few friends with whom we are intimate ; because the entire sphere of thy wishes is confined within the limits of easily attained objects—dost think Louis will feel satisfied here, at home ? Thou thinkest his chamber charming, because the windows look out upon the Elbe and his bed-room lies toward our little garden ; but do not forget, that at Heidelberg, he had the Neckar flowing under his windows, and saw the proud castle opposite reflect its shadow in the limpid waters : and remember, too, that he comes from Switzerland and Italy ! As beautiful as our scenery may appear, it will be insipid and dull to him. Much more, when looking upon his future prospects in life, he discovers that he is ever to move in these shackles, thinkest thou that he will feel happy ? ”

“ Oh ! certainly he will, dear mother,” answered Mary. “ His heart is always so good, so benevolent ; he always so dearly loved the quiet pleasures of our little circle, that he now, also, will feel happy with us. I think, that the very first look at his room will restore his usual cheerfulness. Oh, that he were only well here, to see how the broad splendid Elbe glitters between the rose-bushes in his windows—how the evening sun hovers over the blue hills, throwing his golden tints into his chamber, through the leaves and flowers ! When he finds his books all put in order in the new book-case ; when he sees father’s portrait hanging over the sofa ; and, on the other side, the dear little piano, with the old familiar music books lying upon it,—oh, certainly, dear mother, he will then find himself happy with us ! ”

“ Thou dear little simpleton ! ” said the mother, smiling ; “ thou thinkest that because the neat and well-ordered chamber constitutes thy girlish joy, it will meet the wishes of a man likewise ? Thou knowest nothing of men and the world yet, Mary ! ”

“ But I know my brother ! I know Louis ! ” she replied, and a pearly tear of sisterly affection trembled in her blue eye.

A postilion’s horn at this moment sounded.

“ ‘Tis he ! ” cried Mary, running to the window. The mother, too, started at the sound, but presently recollecting herself, she said :

“ How thou imposest upon thyself, Mary ! Dost think he would come with extra post-horses, like some great lord ? Remember that he can travel but with the limited means of a student. Perhaps, as it often happens,” she

added, with a smile—"he comes, lowly and humble, back to his native place, with a consumptive purse."

Mary, who by this time had become aware of her mistake, said, turning to her mother:

"I imagine, to myself, all the different ways in which he may come. If he give only a gentle knock at the door, I shall think that he means to give us a greater surprise. If a stately carriage comes rolling along, why—what hinders that he should not be seated inside, in company with some friend or travelling companion? When the front-door opens on its hinges, and a man's step is heard on the stairs, I always think of Louis; always hope that the door will be opened, and he come in."

"Heavens! it is he!" she suddenly exclaimed, as the door of the room actually did open, and with the cry: "Brother! dear brother!" she flew towards the intruder and hung around his neck in the closest embrace. She kissed him, she wept, she laughed, and suffered herself to be half dragged to where her mother sat, who tried to rise from the sofa, but sank back overcome, until Louis seized hold of both her hands, kissed her amid tears of joy, and then hid his face in her bosom.

The first moments past, now commenced that gay and merry exchange of unfettered cordiality; those thousand-and-one questionings about trifles and recollections of days gone by; those sweet outpourings of the full heart; that communion of the sweetest feelings of the soul, by the interchanging of which a new existence is created, and every little estrangement resulting from absence at once swept away.

Pushing back the hair from her brother's brow, Mary said, with a smile:

"Dear brother, your brow is as open and handsome as ever; and if I had seen nothing more than that, peeping over a hedge, I could not fail to have known you."

Louis looked into his sister's clear, friendly eye. He responded to her childish playfulness, and laying one hand across his forehead, while he covered his face with the other, so that the eyes only were visible, he said:

"And I would have known you, sister, in distant Sicily, though looking out between the slits of some pretty green window-blind. Thy blue eyes would have betrayed thee directly; and yet they seem to me to be of a purer azure than ever; indeed thou hast, on the whole, become much handsomer, sister!"

"Away with you!" said Mary, blushing as she gently disengaged herself from his hand. "Go along! Let us rather look at each other without wasting compliments: and thou must tell me of a thousand things. But

stop!—first tell me, didst come in the carriage with the four post-horses, which passed by just now?"

"Yes, indeed, Mary, I did," answered Louis. "But I wanted to take you unawares, and therefore got out at the corner. I slipped into the house while the coach rattled by, so that you did not even hear me open the door."

"But tell me," said Mary, with a maidenly curiosity, "how came you to arrive in that handsome coach?"

The mother seemed to have the same question to ask. Louis replied:

"Singularly enough. In Switzerland I became acquainted with some Polish officers, and again we met at Leipzig. They insisted upon my joining them, and I gladly accepted an offer so frankly made. But, dear mother, I have to look to you to enable me to return this civility, for it is almost indispensable for me to tender them an invitation to visit our house."

"If they will not feel out of their element," answered the mother, "thou must know full well that thy friends will always be welcome to me."

"But, brother, you have not seen your chamber yet!" cried Mary, quickly, almost taking the words out of her mother's mouth. "Oh, I must show it to you this moment! And where is your baggage?"

"No hurry about that," said Louis, laughing, for his travelling property was indeed scant.

As Louis entered the quiet, friendly chamber, an expression of sadness came over his features.

"What beautiful roses!" he said, after a pause; "and full of buds!"

"They were always your most admired flowers," said Mary, glad to see him turn his face towards the window; "but here are some carnations also among them; and do they not form a beautiful foreground to the landscape behind? Does not the Elbe glitter like silver between the leaves, and the evening sun shine like gold through that purple sky!"

"Purple! azure! gold! well, it sounds well-nigh fairy-like—at least, quite Italian. But you are right, sister; it is indeed beautiful up here!"

Mary opened two other window-sashes, to allow the mild cooling May-breezes fully to ventilate the room. Louis, his arm encircling the waist of his sister, stepped with her to the window, and looked abroad over the broad, shining river. He remained silent, and so did Mary. But her silence was that of unalloyed happiness, arising from inward contentment; his, the mute troubled fruit of despair.

Had the girl at this time raised her eyes

to her brother, she would have read in that pale countenance the painful conflict of his suffering heart.

" Speak to me of our mother, Mary," at length said he ; " she looks a little pale ; is there any thing serious the matter ? Does she complain of her lungs ? "

" The doctor gives us the best hopes," replied Mary.

And how do you get along in these troublesome times ? Do mother and you feel much anxiety ? "

" Now you are here, Louis, I feel quite easy and safe," answered Mary, gently clinging to her brother. " I confess, the wild confusion of war, even with its dazzling pomp, has almost frightened me. To-morrow, it is said, the Emperor Napoleon is to arrive. Many princes are already come to meet him. What power this man must possess ! How does he constrain them to make these terrible sacrifices, when, almost to a man, they offer their services with the utmost reluctance ? Excepting our king, who clings to him with the craziest infatuation, who—"

" Say no more, Mary," interrupted Louis. " Judge not where the most skilful find it difficult to decide. Recollect that a prince has to weigh and consider. Besides, can such as we comprehend the irresistible power exercised by a superior mind ? Duty and inclination often clash and cross each other so strangely that the keenest intellect is at a loss to discriminate between them."

" How ?" said Mary, in astonishment, " You, Louis, also an admirer of the man who has plunged our country in misery, and who sinks it yet deeper in woe every day ?"

" Dearest sister," answered Louis, " you speak like a child—like many who see only what is before their eyes but detect not the chain of causes and events which have brought about the unhappy state of Germany ; who also are no longer impartial judges, because they have taken sides in the conflict. But let all this pass ; these are serious matters, which are foreign to a female's affairs, and which ought not to sadden the first moments of our meeting."

Thus saying, both left the chamber.

CHAPTER X.

On the day following young Rosen's arrival, the city of Dresden presented the imposing spectacle of an innumerable multitude of people, and the well ordered array of formidable armies. The immediate cause of this commotion and bustle, was the coming

of the Emperor. He was looked for with a solemnity of expectation, which might be called next akin to dread ; for his appearance at this juncture was to be the signal for an enterprise the astonishing boldness of which filled the most daring spirits with awe.

It was the fifteenth of May.

Louis had escorted his mother and sister to the house of a friend, whence the ladies could see the procession at ease. While thus stationed, he all at once heard a voice call out his name. It was Rasinski, who, mounted on a handsome grey charger, was galloping along the ranks of soldiers. He managed the noble animal very gracefully, and with a light and practised hand.

" Good evening, my dear friend of St. Gothard !" he called out to Louis. " I hardly thought that we should meet to-day, for it is a very busy time with us. The Emperor will be here in an hour."

Louis ran down into the street, and making his way through the soldiers, shook the outstretched hand of Rasinski. As he gazed on the dazzling uniform of the handsome cavalier, and witnessed the martial satisfaction beaming from his eyes, a latent feeling of envy sprung up in his breast.

" You look strangely at me, friend," said Rasinski ; " Is there anything particular to observe ?"

Louis was about to reply, when on a sudden the rolling of drums cut him short, and the troopers, closing and dressing their ranks, forced him to make a hasty retreat. A general with a numerous retinue came galloping from the direction of the palace. It was the King of Naples (Murat) in his fantastic gold-bedizened uniform, who, with a truly royal bearing, came prancing through the streets on his bright chestnut charger. He was on his way to meet the Emperor at the field called the " Freiberger Schlag." The sparkling eye of this man rapidly scanned the multitude ; he seemed satisfied. Rasinski had backed his horse a little to one side, and saluted the General respectfully ; he halted, spoke a few words with him, and even shook him by the hand. This distinguishing trait produced an evident effect on the whole suite, and inspired a certain regard for the Polish officer, for even the generals gave him a considerate notice when he joined their ranks to follow in the train.

This splendid cavalcade of marshals, generals, staff-officers of the highest rank, and many German princes, spurred swiftly down towards the gate known by the name of the " Wilsdruffer Thor," through which the Emperor was to enter the city. Every countenance shone with radiance—the tip of ex-

pectation could be read in every face. Louis stood perplexed, when the clatter of galloping horses caused him to turn his head. It was the two young Poles, Boleslaus and Jaromir, hastening to overtake the retinue. They observed Louis also, and as they flew past gave him a friendly salute with the hand.

"Happy fellows!" he thought, "what can cloud your buoyant spirits, who have no other wish for the future than to stake your lives on the redemption of your basely sold country!"

But while thus musing, Louis all at once found himself in the embrace of a man and received a boisterous kiss on the cheek before he had time to ascertain what friend it could be that bestowed upon him so hearty a salute.

"Louis! dost not know me then?" exclaimed the individual, perceiving but too plainly the surprise depicted in the other's countenance. "Is it possible that you have so entirely forgotten me, or am I so greatly altered?"

"What! Bernard, my dear friend Bernard!" cried Louis, "why should I not know thee? But how could I expect to find thee here?"

"The deuce!—at least just as much as I could expect to find thee!" said Bernard, squeezing the hand he retained with all the warmth of true friendship. "Come along," he added, "out of this crowd. A glass of good Italian wine will taste delicious to him who just comes from Naples. Come; for I want some dark corner on purpose, where I can hear thee give an account of thy travels, while we both take a hearty pull at the bottle."

Louis took the arm of his gay schoolmate, and together they pushed their way through the crowd.

"Signor Longo, a flask of Syracuse or Lacrymæ Christi," cried Bernard, on entering the *restaurant*. "Come to the window, Louis, and see the rabble scudding by to get a sight of the Emperor."

The wine was brought, and the friends touched each other's glasses. Scarcely had they done so, however, than bellowing, as of distant thunder, struck the ear.

"The devil!" cried Bernard; "don't you hear the cannon? The Emperor is coming! Look how the rabble is pressing on! Quick, Louis, let us go!"

With these words he seized Louis and dragged him into the street.

The crowd, which swayed to and fro, without any definite purpose, now flooded from every quarter, pressing and pushing towards the Wilsdruffer.

It was already quite dark; the street-lamps were lighted and fire-balls, also, put up to illumine the scene.

"We shall have a night-piece to contemplate," said Bernard; "I like that. But as the Emperor has not yet come, I wish he would stay away a little longer, else we shall not have either daylight or coal-pans enough to see his face by."

It proved, in fact, a false alarm; some other carriage had been mistaken for the Emperor's. The crowd settled back.

"I have no wish to return to that brick-and-mortar hole again," continued Bernard. "Let us ramble about the streets, to pass the time."

The two young men wandered up and down, among the moving and surging masses, half-illuminated by the red glare of the fire-baskets. But, hark! the uproar of voices rolls nearer and nearer!

"Something is going on," cried Bernard, as he forced his way up the steps of a house. "There he comes!" he repeated, pointing to a carriage, behind which were seen a number of horsemen, whose drawn sabres and small, fluttering banners shone in the light. These were Polish Lancers, following the carriage as a *garde d'honneur*. The Emperor had withdrawn into a corner, and seemed unwilling to show himself. But just opposite to the spot where Louis and Bernard were standing, a momentary halt occurred in the procession; he leaned forward, and his countenance was in consequence seen quite plainly by the strong reflection of the lights.

"There he is!" shouted Bernard again.

He and Louis kept their eyes immovably fixed on the Emperor's face. When at last the head disappeared, and the procession moved on, Louis awoke as from a trance, and both moved away out of the crowd.

Grave and silent they proceeded side by side. Suddenly Bernard quickly uttered, "Good night, my friend! we shall meet tomorrow!" and vanished in the darkness.

Louis went home thoughtful and grave. Even the loving "good night," which Mary gave him, could not dispel his unsettled thoughts.

CHAPTER XI.

THE next day, in the forenoon, Louis was taking a walk on the Terrace of Bruhl. All at once Bernard stood before him.

"*Salve tibi!*" he exclaimed; "I have just seen our Zeus or Pluto, as you like, on horseback."

"The Emperor?" cried Louis, with interest, answering the salutation by extending

his hand. "Well, how does he look by daylight?"

"Truly, I do not know how I shall describe him," said the light-hearted Bernard; "there was so much noise all around; bells ringing, cannons firing, uproar among the people, troops marching to the parade-ground,—in a word, all Pandemonium let loose. But when I now, as a painter, (the profession this young man followed, was that of an artist,) endeavor to recall the Emperor to mind, it was, methinks, a pale, sallow countenance, with a pointed, angular profile, such as a dog may make in tearing a piece of paper. A pair of greyish dark eyes, a short thick-set body, and withal so mysterious in its influence, that I could in nowise comprehend what ghost had bewitched me."

"Nor did I myself fail receiving this influence," said Louis. "As the Emperor yesterday passed us by, I felt as if each one who looked upon him in that mute crowd felt himself irresistibly drawn towards him—and in spite of the ringing of bells, the thunder of cannon, and the hurrahs of the soldiers."

"Thou talkest like a Thales," answered Bernard, "yea, like Solon himself, whom I hold in higher esteem, because he knew how to give good laws to a gainsaying people, whereas the former only studied the laws of nature with tolerable success. But see! there comes a fine fellow; he looks as if he could be an Emperor too!"

"Look here, my friend," said Rasinski, for it was he of whom Bernard spoke; "now we may at last commune together a little seasonably. For five or six days I shall be my own master; and some of these, at least, we shall be able to spend together. In the meantime you may congratulate me. The Emperor has commissioned me to organise a light regiment, which is to act as a free corps, or volunteers; and he has invested me with full authority to choose my own officers and men. I could not have dreamt of a more trustworthy or honorable post. It will require three days yet to obtain all the necessary orders and commissions in writing; and then, after making all necessary arrangements, I am off immediately for Warsaw, where I intend to select my comrades from among my own countrymen."

Bernard had narrowly observed the handsome Pole; scanning him as if he would retain his noble proportions in his mind. This singular gazing seemed almost offensive to Rasinski; Louis thought it time to introduce them to each other.

"The best friend of my youth, Bernard, a painter.—Count Rasinski, with whom I became acquainted on my journey over the St. Gothard," he said.

"I hope nothing prevents us being all friends together," said Bernard, with animation.

"Certainly, nothing," answered Rasinski, smiling, and taking Bernard's half-offered hand; "for there is no truer axiom, than that two bodies which are equal to a third, are equal to each other. In the meantime—"

"You will be my guest to-day, in order to prove the truth of your axiom," promptly Louis interposed. "I have," he continued, "already given my mother the promise to introduce yourself and your two younger friends to my family—unless you disdain an invitation to join the circumscribed circle of the *bourgeoisie*."

"What strange talk is that, my young friend?" said Rasinski, pleasantly, raising his finger with an admonishing signification. "Can any thing be more charming to the soldier, whose existence is nothing but a constant heartless and homeless wandering on the great highway of public events, than the confidential and sincere family-circle?"

"I thought a soldier could feel only the puerility of such relations."

"Oh, my friend! you cannot believe how greatly one who roams a stranger ever learns to prize the happiness of the domestic fire-side! One day enjoyed in this manner, becomes an inestimable treasure in his wanderings through the desert. It does one good to be reminded by the intercourse with others, that there was a time when we also sustained the endearing relation of a son, a brother, perhaps of a husband and a father!"

"Hem!" said Bernard, "there is some truth in that."

"One who is accustomed," continued Rasinski, "to see the horizon of existence shifting every day between storm and sunshine, may very naturally feel himself straitened by the monotony of an unbroken life. But he who steadily and truly devotes himself to a uniform course, beholds a thousand nice shadings and intermixtures of tints in the dull, one-colored picture, which satisfy his temperate mind, and present, as in a magic lantern, the fitful drama of life. Of course such a one must shun all violent ruptures. Clefts and gulfs might mar the smoothness of his panorama. But is there anything gained by accustoming ones-self to the strongest stimulants? Do not our faculties soon become so blunted that we scarcely feel the difference between ice and burning coals? Just so is it that our blunted moral sense speedily produces indifference and insensibility."

"The river does very well for a skiff—the ocean is for the man-of-war's-man, and I belong to the latter," said the spirited Bernard. "But, to speak of something else. Thy in-

vitation, Louis, pleases me not. Do we not have a lovely May-day, with sunshine and blue skies ? I propose that we unite in a trip out in free air."

"Willingly," answered Louis ; "I propose, then, a water-party on the Elbe."

"Excellent!" cried Rasinski ; "one day out of doors knits together the hearts of men quicker than a year in the society of the saloon."

"But when?" asked Bernard ; "I think three o'clock would be the fittest hour."

"Well," replied Louis, "I will make haste to engage a boat. But, at all events, I must beg you all to meet at my mother's house ; for, in case any impediment should present itself, my first plan can be carried into effect."

The friends separated after these words, each going his own way. Louis remained standing a few minutes near the edge of the terrace—looked up the river, deliberating within himself to what point the excursion had better be directed. The proposition had gained his approbation almost by surprise, as Bernard, by his blunt, impetuous manner, and Rasinski, by his eagerness in catching at the idea to spend the day in the open air, had left him no room to choose. Still he felt that it was not quite in order that his sister should undertake an excursion of this kind, in the company of so many strange gentlemen—especially if she were to be the only young lady present. The major part of the inhabitants of Dresden were, moreover, rigidly German in their mode of thinking, and bore a cordial hatred toward the strangers, as the oppressors and vampires of their country. Mary deeply partook of these sentiments ; but, even setting that aside, there were too many highly estimable people among the opposing party, in the opinion of whom, a young girl would place herself in a dubious light by publicly associating with the officers of the army, who were not in the best odor, on the score of morals. The whole affair was, therefore, very unpleasant to him, and he was just planning in which way he should best make the proposal to his mother, when he saw her with Mary and several other ladies coming down the terrace.

Before he had made up his mind whether to advance to meet them or not, Mary, who had recognised him at a distance, came skipping lightly towards him, exclaiming :

"There you are, brother ! Oh, how glad I am to see you ! Come along with me, and you shall see some old acquaintances."

Saying this, she drew him forward toward the ladies, who had stopped, seemingly for the purpose of awaiting Louis' approach.

Led on by Mary, he stepped nearer, some-

what abashed. An elderly lady and two young girls were in company with his mother. These last smiled pleasantly, as his look, doubtful and prying, rested upon them. This was, however, but for a moment.

"My dear aunt!" he suddenly exclaimed ; "and, is it possible ! Emma and Julia ?"

"To be sure," said the elderly lady ; "but is it lawful to forget one's next of kin ?"

Louis kissed the aunt's hand ; how to salute the daughters was a more critical point ; for, though he had spent most of his boyish days with them, yet a certain diffidence interposed between the grown-up young man and the ripening young maidens.

Emma and Julia were near relatives of Louis, for their parent was his own mother's sister, a widow, and she was living with her daughters on a small farm a few miles from Dresden.

They had unexpectedly come to the city with their mother to see the Emperor, and to witness the public festivities announced to be given in honor of his visit to Dresden.

The most friendly interest was mutually manifested by all concerned, and the joy of meeting would no doubt have been yet more unequivocally manifested, had the publicity of the place not imposed some restraint. Mary, therefore, urged a speedy return home, where they might exchange their greetings with all the warmth of a family relationship.

Hardly had the party arrived home, and sat down, when a knocking was heard at the door. It was Bernard, who walked in gaily, saluting all present.

He was received with the greatest cordiality by the mother of Louis ; Julia and Emma, too, remembered him very well, for he had formerly made them frequent presents of his little sketches, to satisfy their childish importunities.

"You are surprised, Louis," he said, "to see me here so much before the time ; but there are important things going on, which I must communicate. The whole court are going to Pillnitz to-day, to ascend the Porsberg, and then to go down by torch-light. I thought that the ladies perhaps would be pleased to see the show, and it requires an earlier start. Nobody but myself in all Dresden knows anything of the affair, for the Marshal of the Court has just told me of it, by which we are great gainers ; for we can, through this, get a good place at Pillnitz."

This intelligence of Bernard's was hailed with raptures by the two country Misses. It was determined to hurry their departure, but to take, instead of a boat, a couple of carriages, the procuring of which Bernard undertook, at the same time pledging himself to look up Count Rasinski and his young

companions, and notify them of the altered arrangement.

The clock had but just struck two, when one of the carriages bespoke by Bernard was at the door; the other came a few minutes later, in which were already seated the three officers with Bernard. Louis hastened down to welcome them.

When the door of the parlor opened, and Rasinski, with his lofty figure, entered, there was no mistaking the glad surprise depicted in the countenances of the females. The three girls blushed, from a dim, yet correct, consciousness that their looks had betrayed the impression made upon them by the gallant Pole. Louis' mother, though by no means unaccustomed to society above her present condition, felt for a moment confused, but the friendly manner of Rasinski quickly dispelled these feelings. On Louis presenting him as "Count Rasinski," he said, pleasantly:

"My claims on the friendship of your son, madam, are too recent to justify my complaint that he did not introduce me as his friend, else the first word which passed between us must have been an accusation from me."

"Yet my son," said the mother, "seems to count greatly on the rights of friendship, when venturing to introduce you to a circle where nothing can be offered but such gifts as take their value from the sincere friendship which prompts them."

"These are the only ones which I covet, which are precious to my heart above everything else," answered Rasinski.

Louis now introduced his gallant friend and companions to the rest of those present. As the gentlemen declined taking the proffered refreshments, there was nothing to delay their departure. Rasinski escorted Louis' mother down stairs, the latter his aunt. The first carriage was occupied by the aunt, Mary, Bernard, and the two young officers. The mother, Rasinski, Julia, Emma and Louis followed in the second, and the party set out for the pleasures of Pillnitz.

CHAPTER XII.

THE plan of a visit to the Porsberg had been so suddenly resolved upon at court, that but very few persons in the city knew anything about it, and consequently our pleasure-party found Pillnitz entirely deserted. Louis embraced this opportunity for engaging a private room at the inn, fearing that by-and-bye the attendance would be so large that a

place could not be had. The ladies having re-adjusted their toilets, proceeded to the garden, where the shady walks offered the most agreeable retreat from the close sultry heat. Later, in the cool of the evening, they intended to ascend the mountain, as at that time they would not be molested by the many vehicles, the court not being expected to reach the top till half an hour before sun-down.

The promenaders passed their time quite pleasantly. Travellers, and especially military men, who have long led a wandering life, succeed generally much sooner in becoming familiar than others. The anticipation of a speedy parting teaches us to prize fleeting moments. We take far more notice of him whom we can see only for a short time, perhaps to be separated for ever, than we do of him whose path we expect will run parallel with ours.

It could not be otherwise but that girls brought up in the quietude of country-life, of good parts and understanding, but whose education had, from circumstances, been deficient in many points, should be strongly attracted by the conversation of two lively youths, in whose breasts glowed the noble flame of a patriotic and warlike enthusiasm. Jaromir, moreover, inherited that popular, artless vivacity of the Poles, which received a new charm from the singular accent with which he spoke the German language, and the consequently quaint and laughable manner in which he communicated his narratives. Boleslaus, on the contrary, was of a grave demeanor; but the dignity of his countenance, his high brow of sculptured marble, shaded by dark locks clustering around it, and his fiery eyes, secured to him a warm interest in every beholder.

The youthful couples enjoyed, therefore, their happiness in all innocence, without troubling themselves with theories respecting its cause; it pervaded and agitated their bosoms, as does a fair day in spring; the balmy and soothing influence of which flows from the hidden fountains of the soul, provoking a general longing after something, without fixing our gaze on any definite object of hope.

As the two friends, Louis and Bernard, proceeded after their companions and were just entering a shady avenue into which the latter had turned, they encountered two strangers, one of whom was dressed very studiously, and carried the red ribbon of the "legion of honor" at his button-hole. The other kept at a short distance behind, so that he seemed to be a valet, or at most, a secretary. They were followed at a still greater distance, by two servants in livery. Saluting the young men courteously, the gentle

man with the ribbon passed them quickly, while the other stopped a moment, and looked back to the servants. On turning round again, Louis and Bernard were close upon him. He seemed struck with their appearance. With a hasty bow and a searching look, he passed on. Bernard, more struck by the stranger's physiognomy, than the stranger himself by his own, looked back after him, and observed the stranger doing the same. In the meantime they had passed the servants unnoticed.

"I should know that face," said Bernard; "it seems to me I have seen it before, somewhere."

"I was struck with that face, too," answered Louis; "but I have no memory for common-place countenances or with which some remarkable circumstance is not connected."

"Unless he crossed our path yesterday or to-day," said Bernard, in a light manner, "thou mayest have seen him at the South-Pole, and I at the North."

"He appeared as if he knew you or myself," answered Louis; "at least he looked very sharply at us."

"May be that he recollects us both, and is astonished to encounter us here in the garden of Pillnitz. It is provoking! I know that the fellow will spoil my temper for the whole afternoon; for I am sure that I will keep thinking of him all the time, just because I shall endeavor to banish him from my mind."

During this conversation, the two friends had overtaken their companions, when Bernard attached himself to Mary, to whom Rasinski hitherto had paid marked attention.

The time to ascend the mountain drew nigh. As this requires the labor of an hour, Louis thought it proper that the ladies should take some rest and refreshment before beginning the enterprise; which accordingly they did at the inn.

They then set out on their pilgrimage. The several paths leading up were already quite animated with pedestrians. Men and women of all classes and conditions, were seen climbing towards the summit. Upon Louis with his party reaching the ruins, his mother declared that the climbing was painful to her, and that she must forego enjoying the prospect from the top, and remain where she was; which, indeed, was not disagreeable, as she observed several well-known families from the city, whom she could join. Her sister was of the same mind, and remained also. The young folks, therefore, continued their way alone, while the matrons seated themselves before a tent put up in the bushes near the ruins, in which refreshments were sold.

Louis and Bernard, who knew the way, were the guides. They sought, wherever practicable, to leave the main road and to select more quiet paths, which wound themselves along through the woods. They were here surrounded by a pleasant green twilight; the turf, covered with fresh springing flowers, gave out its delicious odors; the sky peeped through the canopy of foliage; fountains purled and skipped in light mimic cascades across the path, and then dashed their winding streams down the declivity; the birds sang their loud carols; a thousand insects were heard humming. Spring breathed and lived in bush and forest, in water and in air, steeping the soul with a dreamy delight. Now and then an opening in the forest permitted a glance down the mountain. Pillnitz was seen mirrored in the broad river; now the eye wandered far away over the blue hills towards the boundaries of Bohemia; and on looking through another opening behind, offering an uninterrupted view, there was seen the entire mountain in its green descent, deep down into the valley, the road all alive with a thousand varying figures, and the ruin in the back-ground, leaning against a dark slope of the mountain-forest. The walk was thus much shortened by the pleasant variety of scenery, and the summit was reached, without effort, and without any sensible fatigue.

Festive preparations were here in progress for the reception of the august visitors. A great number of laborers and gardeners' daughters were busily engaged, under the direction of the royal gardener, adorning the place with wreaths and festoons of flowers. A splendid tent had been pitched on the green sward; and even the ancient watch-tower, from the pinnacles of which one could see only over the tops of the neighboring trees, was ornamented with flowers, presenting a strange anomaly with the old crumbling stones. Bernard cast a hasty glance over the whole, and said:

"Very pretty; not exactly artistic, yet festive and gay. But you should have let the tower alone, good people! It looks as if you were putting wreaths of flowers on the bald pate of an octagenarian. Flowers belong to youth—wreaths are for bright flowing locks."

So saying, he took, without farther ceremony, a just finished wreath from the hands of one of the flower-girls, and with a dexterous and graceful motion, pressed it on Mary's bright brown curls. "The queen of Spring!" he cried.

"Beautiful!" said Julia and Emma, looking at Mary.

Bernard's idea found so much favor, that Rasinski, slipping a few coins into the hand

of the flower-girl, obtained two similar wreaths, which he presented to Emma and Julia ; insisting that they also must decorate themselves in the same way. They at first declined, blushingly and with girlish dread of making themselves appear singular ; but Mary pressing them to comply, they finally gave in. Yet they were mainly induced to do this from the circumstance, of which all now first became aware to their surprise, that they found themselves quite alone among the workmen, as no one of the spectators had arrived so high up. For this, they had, unknown to them, to thank the officers, particularly Rasinski ; for orders had been issued to admit no one not belonging to the court, beyond certain limits on the mountain ; and to enforce this, sentries had been posted on the main-path ; the smaller side-paths were left unguarded. Two sentries were at the top, but as Rasinski wore his rich uniform, and was accompanied by two young officers, it was believed by the soldiers that he had the amplest right and privilege to remain on the mountain.

They now ascended the tower ; Rasinski offered his arm to Mary, to assist her up the narrow steps. It was not the first time that she had enjoyed the rich prospect, but still its beauty always gave her renewed pleasure. Looking away over the dense green-wood, which hitherto had barred the prospect, the eye wandered over the tall, graceful tree-tops, waving to and fro in the wind, to an almost unlimited distance. The greater part of the surrounding country is extended in undulating hills, crowned with growing grain and verdant forest, between which picturesque villages and towns are scattered profusely. Higher ridges of mountain rose up around this beautiful panorama, like the rugged shores of a placid sea, set in diamonds. The broad silver belt of the Elbe, divides the landscape into two distinct parts. The eye dwells delighted on the beautiful images reflected by the river, from the blue misty towers and steeples of Dresden, over the vine-yards of Loschwitz, to the rugged mountain-peaks of Königstein and Lilienstein. In the midst of this tapestry, woven in variegated colors, stands the green blooming mountain itself, with its now gentle, now abrupt slopes and dells, as the heart of this wide-reaching panorama. To the charm of a wonder-inspiring prospect, it unites romantic and truly picturesque views, while the scenery in the distance belongs less to painting than poetry !

While all were engaged admiring the scene, a dark, grey cloud arose above the mountain. At the same time a hollow murmur was heard, and the trees of the forest-clad hills were seen waving and tossing to and fro. A violent gust of wind swept round the tower,

and by the suddenness of the attack came very near carrying off the shawls and bonnets of the ladies.

The girls looked at each other, perplexed and anxious. The storm threatened to become very violent, and was now so close upon them, that escape was out of question. Their situation was, therefore, somewhat critical. But the spectacle in the meantime assumed so interesting a character, that in some measure it crowded out their apprehensions. The black, portentous clouds rolled up in heavy masses from the easterly horizon, and gradually shrouded the mountain in their grey mantle. The river, roughly curled by the wind, wound its dark way under the vault of the lowering sky, reflecting its shadow from the deep. In the west, the clear light of the purest ether shone from under the beetling clouds, which, piled together before the sun's disk, were bordered with a bright fringe of gold.

"Sublime!" cried Bernard, "I would willingly give a dozen clear, sunshiny days for a storm like this. What illuminations are thrown upon the landscape ! Night and day pitched together in sharp contest ! Look, how the Sonnenstein still shines over there near Pirna, and flashes against the dark-blue clouds, piling up behind it. And the white sails there on the Elbe, which float away like sea-gulls over the grey flood ; the craft really leave a track of foam behind them."

"It rains hard over there," remarked Louis, pointing his finger to a certain point.

"Where?" asked Mary.

"There, on the right from the Königstein, where you see those thick grey and violet streaks shooting out of the bosom of the cloud toward the earth ; it is very plain that the rain is drawing more and more towards the west."

"Could we possibly reach Pillnitz, before the storm breaks out in earnest ?" asked Mary.

"Hardly," answered Louis ; "and I would advise no-one to make the attempt, for we can all find shelter here in the little vault of the tower, which they certainly will open to us. But perhaps the storm may pass by altogether, for the wind seems to increase so much, that it may easily drive the clouds away over our heads."

And so indeed it was, for the clouds, torn in pieces, scudded away over the mountain-peak, gathering their forces together on the other side of the stream in a more compact array, so that Louis' prediction seemed about to be verified. While they were yet talking about it, a horseman came at a full gallop up the mountain path. He brought the intelligence to the head-gardener that the ascent by torch-light had been suddenly

postponed, and that consequently, all preparations for the reception of the august party were to be discontinued. The workmen, on receiving this warning, hurried to put on their laid-aside garments. The flower girls threw their handkerchiefs over their heads, and hastened down the mountain.

These proceedings, and especially the flight of the women, naturally excited apprehension in the minds of the young girls. Mary suggested that they might reach a shelter, as well as the others, and perhaps there might be some dwelling in the neighborhood to receive them. Louis quickly ran down the stairs of the tower to enquire of the head-gardener. The latter was busily engaged in having the tent struck and the implements used in its erection, put away in the vault of the tower. To Louis' question he answered, that they certainly might yet reach Pillnitz in safety, as the passage down the mountain could be made with much more despatch than up ; and besides, the weather here on the summit, where they overlooked the entire horizon, always seemed more threatening and imminent than it actually was. An hour might yet pass before the rain would come. But if the ladies and gentlemen should prefer to remain where they were, he would willingly give them the key to the little narrow room in the tower ; this however, being now filled with tools chairs and tables, was hardly capable of holding even a few persons.

Louis thankfully accepted the offer, and promised carefully to lock the door, and to leave the key in Pillnitz. However experienced the gardener might be, it appeared now that he had deceived himself with regard to the proximity of the storm. Louis wished at least to leave it to the choice of the ladies whether they would rather return, than abide in the not very pleasant asylum offered. He took the key, therefore, and hastened up the steps, to lay the matter before them. The votes were divided. The men, especially Bernard, were strongly in favor of remaining, as evidently no place of refuge could be gained before the out-breaking of the storm in all its fury. The ladies were disposed to commence an immediate descent, mainly from a consideration of the anxiety which their mothers must suffer from their non-appearance. Their voices being entitled to the greatest share of regard, it was resolved to depart. But as Mary, conducted by Rasinski, placed her foot on the topmost step of the steep and narrow stairs, a flash of lightning seemed to set all in a blaze. Mary, blinded and terrified by the shock, drew hastily back, but her foot slipped, and, but for Rasinski quickly seizing her, she might have had a terrible fall ;

at least, so imminent seemed the danger, that Emma and Julia, who saw her totter, rushed towards her, uttering a piercing cry of terror. But Mary had quickly recovered herself.

Rasinski supported her very carefully, and helped her down with great caution. When they had reached the ground, he first noticed that she walked with some difficulty. "The foot pains me a little," she answered, on his questioning her, "but it will soon be over." She tried to command some twinges of pain and to step boldly ; but she was unable to do so ; the foot doubled under her, and she had to hold firmly to Rasinski to avoid sinking to the ground.

"I shall have to await the storm here," she said ; "for I cannot possibly hurry down."

"Not even if I support you on the other side, dear Mary ?" asked Louis, taking her right arm.

Mary essayed a few steps, and then said, while the struggle against pain was plainly seen in her features, "I believe not even so."

"Let us carry her down," cried Bernard with energy.

"No, no," said Mary, with a placid smile, accompanied by a deprecating motion of the hand ; "I can very well stay here ; Louis will stay with me."

"Then we will all stay," cried Julia resolutely, which resolution Emma immediately seconded.

"I really think it will be the best thing we can do," said Louis, "for the rain begins to fall. Probably it will soon be over, as it sets in with such violence."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE last remaining workmen had now left the place : the head-gardener was already gone. Louis, who still had the key, was therefore fully at liberty to make his arrangements in the tower. He opened the narrow receptacle, which being filled with tables, chairs, tent-poles, and many other articles piled up in disorder, hardly allowed the entrance of so many persons, much less any convenience or comfort. The gentlemen set vigorously to work to procure more room by putting things together in a more compact order ; they succeeded finally, so that they could place eight chairs together for the eight individuals present ; the door had to be left open to admit air and light, for it was impracticable to effect a side-opening, as the windows were placed so high up. They

were just in time with the completion of the arrangement. Large drops of rain were falling, and the wind lulled. A loud clap of thunder just above the heads of the party seemed to tear the heavy clouds into shreds, and to open the windows of heaven. Big pattering hail-stones intermixed with sleet, came down with the pouring rain. The tender foliage of the trees was torn from the branches with desolating vehemence. The refugees might indeed congratulate themselves that they had not ventured on the descent. The three young girls sat together pale and silent. Mary suffered great pain; sitting between Julia and Emma, she leaned gently against the latter, while the former affectionately held one of her hands.

The greatest violence of the storm endured for about half an hour, when it began to abate; the lightning became less vivid, and the rain, though yet pouring fast, had in some measure moderated.

The girls began to breathe freer, and enjoyed the pleasurable sensation experienced after the passing away of inconvenience or of danger, which in generous minds always awakens a sweet emotion.

Bernard exclaimed: "It is too close here in this cage; I must have some fresh air!" With these words he sprang out in the open air, where the refreshing spring-shower, now falling only like a silvery mist, soon cooled his glowing cheeks. Louis also stepped out. They proceeded together to the other side of the tower, from whence they had a more open prospect.

"It will rain this way for twenty-four hours yet," said Bernard; "but listen to what I would say. Thou hast a sister, who is worth more than thou and I put together. Certes, she is not so bad, for a woman, and I believe loves thee better than thou deservest. Tears have always been my decided aversion; that is, in my own peepers, else I would not go bail that I would look upon thee with so friendly an eye."

"There is a tear in thine eye, now," said Louis, "which thou needest not be ashamed of."

"All fudge and nonsense, man!" cried Bernard vexedly; "nothing but a drop of rain that fell on my cheek. I tell thee, that tears in a man's eye are as abhorrent to me as a trooper's oath, or mustaches on the lips of a girl; I do not even like to see women weep, for it is contagious; but, only the reality, understand; for I will not deny that I love to sketch female countenances in sorrow, and can prove it on the spot."

So saying, he drew forth a sketch-book with parchment leaves, which he always carried about him.

"In this little book," he said, "there is

many a face worth looking at, though blue eyes do not always exhibit the smile of the placid blue sky. Thy sister should most assuredly be added, were it not that the unlucky rain prohibits one from doing anything. In fact, I should like to sketch the entire group; even that god of war, Rasinski, who like the majestic eagle, shelters the three doves under his wing."

"I am glad that thou hast the sketches with thee," replied Louis, "for I am afraid we shall have a tedious rain, and expectation deferred makes the time seem doubly long. If then we can beguile an hour with the ladies, it would be a great thing indeed. Let us go in and show your book to the girls."

"We have examined the weather," began Louis, as they regained the company; "the rain will gradually exhaust itself. In the mean time our friend Bernard will amuse us with his sketch-book, and thus we shall finally be the gainers by our misfortunes."

"And are not the dealings of Providence ever thus?" said Mary, with a smile.

"Certainly," Bernard answered; "and I will endeavor particularly to profit by them; For if I am to exhibit my little portfolio, it would be impracticable to have it pass from hand to hand at the turning over of every leaf, so I must be the interpreter. I must therefore beg of you to obey my directions for a moment, while I make such arrangements as shall secure to me the most enviable place."

All were willing to yield to this preamble. Bernard then placed four chairs in a row, the right one nearest the door. Here he made Mary take her seat, took his own next to her, and placed Emma and Julia on his left. The remaining four gentlemen took standing places behind.

"Well," said Bernard, "I am going to begin; but one thing I must stipulate. You may ask any thing you please about men, landscapes, about names, condition and location; but the female heads must remain incog., for really I cannot allow every body to look into secrets of this kind."

All acquiesced in this law, and with great alacrity commenced examining the sketches. Most of them, like the painter himself, were bold and animated, taking their character from a few fearless touches, more prominent and sharp than carefully filled up, and seldom ornamental or elegant. But withal he had shown the more delicate graces of his pencil. The contents of the book consisted of sketches, romantic clusters of rocks, groups of trees, now and then an entire landscape; interspersed, were characteristic heads of various nations, Norwegian fishermen, a hunter of the eider-duck, a dairy of reindeers; and such like. In fine, every thing

was striking and characteristic, and owing to the nature of the objects, uncommonly attractive.

" You will observe," said Bernard, turning leaf after leaf, " this highlander with his daughter ; the sketch behind them is a part of 'Loch Katrine.' Civilization now advances with every leaf, for before long we will find ourselves in the midst of the best London society. Look ; there is, as I live, a lady, whom I sketched by stealth, as she sat on the terrace in front of her cottage ornée, while I was hid in an elder bush."

They went on turning over the leaves. Some caricatures followed next, then some pretty country-girl, perhaps. Finally they were in London. As he had already said, Bernard passed by the female figures without comment. Here and there was found a sweet modest English-face among the wanton and debauched.

" Oh, how pretty !" cried Mary, as Bernard turned over a new leaf, " how very beautiful !"

Rasinski stooped over Mary's shoulder, his attention being challenged by her exclamation. Almost in amazement, he cried also : " By heavens ! a charming head."

" Indescribably !" chimed in Mary ; " but who is she ? This one you must inform us about."

" But what if I had laid down my rule precisely on account of this head ?" answered Bernard ; " it is not so, certainly, yet I am obliged to adhere to it. I purloined this face, as Prometheus did the divine spark from heaven, at the King's Theatre in London. It was there I stole this head, with its soft, passionate beauty."

" Oh, how affecting those tears are !" said Mary.

Louis, who, not to incommodate Rasinski, had hitherto kept himself behind, now leaned over to look at the portrait. To his amazement, he recognised—the *likeness of Bianca*. An involuntary, half-smothered cry escaped his lips.

" And could you really not learn anything about her ?" Mary repeated. " Such a lovely being could not remain unknown even in that great Babylon of the world."

" Upon my word I know nothing," answered Bernard. " I made some effort, it is true, but with very bad success ; how, I will tell you directly. The mild dignity of that countenance, the unspeakably touching grief therein depicted—for, to tell the truth, I have achieved only a caricature of the original—made me almost—why should I not acknowledge it—well nigh delirious, as I sat on my seat in the pit. I would have that face, I vowed irrevocably to myself ; but how should I take it without attracting attention ? My

next neighbor was a merchant, who for a long period had resided in Constantinople, and had there become somewhat addicted to the use of oriental tropes and figures of speech. We happened to be slightly acquainted. This man noticed that I kept looking steadfastly at a certain box in the first tier, instead of on the stage, though Juliet, on the stage, had just taken her farewell of Romeo. He said : ' That is a face worth painting, sir ; especially when out of the blue heavens of her eyes the moist pearls of its dewy essence glitters among the rose-buds of her cheeks.' She was at the time, you will observe, shedding the sweetest tears I ever beheld. ' Yes, yes, indeed, by Jove !' said I ; ' but where, and how ?' ' Up there is an empty box,' he whispered, ' which affords the best possible point of view ; if you enter that, and leave the door of the lobby a little ajar, it will admit just so much light to fall upon your leaf as you need, and you yourself remain concealed in the shadow.'

" I made all speed to follow this advice. My position was perfectly favorable ; I sat in the recess of the box quite unobserved, looking that divine creature right in the face, while her suffused eyes were steadily directed toward the stage. The delightful robbery succeeded as admirably as it was possible in such circumstances. Absorbed in my task, I had not noticed that some one had entered the box. All at once, a harsh, disagreeable voice called out : ' Sir !'—I started.—' One word with you, sir !' said the voice, which belonged to a man of about thirty, who beckoned me to come out into the corridor. I perceived what the thing meant, and of course followed him. The unknown preceded me into the street. When there, he began questioning me about what right I had to take the portrait of a lady without her knowledge, and so forth. I gave him short answers, and we got quite warm. The upshot of it was, that a meeting was appointed for the next morning, at eight o'clock, in Hyde Park. The stranger then left me, without again entering the theatre ; I, on the contrary, retraced my steps to my box, in order to give the portrait a few more touches. But it was only to find the one opposite entirely deserted. The beautiful creature had vanished. I asked the door-keeper.—' They have just left in their carriage,' was the answer, but he knew nothing about who they were. I hastened down into the pit, to my merchant. He was no longer there. My only consolation now was the meeting in Hyde Park, where I hoped at least to learn the name of my antagonist. At half-past seven, punctually, I was there ; but if I had stood there till this hour, I believe no one would have come. In short, I lost every

trace, for even the merchant did the same day suddenly sail for the Levant, without my being able to see him. I have since shown the likeness to intimate friends, but no one knows it. In vain did I frequent all the theatres of London every night for three months—never missing a representation of Romeo and Juliet; but never have I succeeded in discovering the least trace or track of my beautiful incognito."

CHAPTER XIV.

BERNARD's narrative had so fully rivetted the attention of every one, that it was not observed that the rain had in the meantime re-commenced, and that the darkness of night began to spread around them.

Mary now first became aware of it, and began to feel some little anxiety. She tried if she were able to walk, and would in that case boldly face the weather; but she found it impracticable; the foot was swollen very much, and she suffered acute pain. Louis, suffering under his recent shock, stood buried in deep thought. Mary gently took his hand, and said, in a low voice:

"What shall we do now, dear brother? We are truly in a predicament; I feel that I cannot walk down, even if the weather should clear off."

Louis reflected a moment, and then said: "Now that the storm has set in again, the matter is easily decided. I will go down, and will send up the carriage for you. I am so uneasy that I really long for a cooling shower; and it is high time, else night will set in before the carriage comes up."

A contention now arose among the young men, who should be the one to accompany Louis. He himself would have been glad to take Bernard with him, so as to question him touching Bianca; but, at the same time, it seemed to him more proper that as an older friend of the house, he should stay, so that the three girls would not be left alone with the officers. He therefore declined all company, though Rasinski and his military friends offered their services.

"It is entirely unnecessary," said Louis, as they pressed him with friendly importunity. "One is quite sufficient; why, then, trouble two persons about it?"

Without farther parley, then, he left, promising that in about an hour's time the carriage should be there to take them away.

The stipulated time passed amidst some anxiety; for, after their natural protector

and kinsman had left them, the girls began distinctly to feel the awkwardness of their position.

The rain kept pouring down furiously; a grey fog rolled itself around the mountain; gradually it grew quite dark. An hour had now elapsed. Mary hoped every minute to hear the carriage coming. She listened intensely to every noise, in the hope of hearing the crack of a whip. By-and-bye she became quite uneasy; half an hour beyond the time fixed had passed away without any sign of the wished-for succor.

Night had now fully set in. Even calculating on the rain and the beclouded state of the sky, it must be quite late. Mary now and then asked Bernard, in a low tone, what o'clock it was; at first he gave her delusive answers, but finally told her that he no longer could see the time by his watch.

Mary was not disquieted by their own situation alone; she began now to tremble for the safety of others. Had anything happened to Louis, or to her mother? To this was added the pain of her foot, which had gradually become so intense as to produce a slight fever.

Neither Bernard, nor the other men, could shut their eyes to the conviction that something extraordinary must have happened, for two hours had now elapsed since Louis had departed. They began, therefore, to deliberate among themselves what was to be done, and whether duty to their friend did not require them seriously to investigate the matter. Bernard considered it best to make a clean breast, so as not to increase the alarm of the girls by a mysterious hesitancy, which, after all, could not be maintained. All agreed in this. He therefore told Mary plainly that he began to feel uneasy himself, and considered it a duty to make search after Louis.

Mary responded by a pressure of the hand, for it had weighed on her heart a great while to beg of the gentlemen the very service which they now voluntarily offered. But she shrank from it, both because they might look upon her alarm as groundless, and because she thought it would be asking too much from them.

Bernard, being best acquainted with the road, undertook, with Jaromir, to go down; Rasinski, as being the oldest among them, staid behind to protect the ladies, and kept Boleslaus by him, as it was problematical whether Mary's condition would not require two men's help.

Bernard and Jaromir started. They promised that, happen what might, they would bring or send intelligence. Though the rain fell in torrents, and they could not see a hand before them, the travellers found little difficulty at first in following the right track.

They reached the ruin without accident, and already thought themselves quite near their destination, when all at once they found themselves away from the road, floundering through the long, thick grass. They sought to regain the path, but in vain. Not to lose time, they resolved to press right ahead, down through brush-wood, high grass or grain, as they could not fail of the main bearing of the way. This, however, was not so easily done ; first, they found themselves impeded by a pretty wide and deep ditch, which the rain had filled, and after they finally effected a passage over that, were brought up all standing against a thick and prickly hedge. They had to grope their way along the hedge the best way they could, to find an opening, or else an end to it ; but were suddenly checked by another fence running at angles with the first, which compelled them to begin climbing up the mountain again. Fortunately, Bernard discovered a spot where they could easily get over the fence. After doing this, they perceived a light at some distance, which appeared as if proceeding from one of the out-buildings belonging to the palace. Could they only reach that, they would easily find the inn. They soon noticed, however, that the light was not stationary, but moved towards them ; they saw people with two lanterns. Rejoiced to fall in with some one, they proceeded to meet them, and soon stepped on the trodden path on which the others were approaching. Bernard and Jaromir being concealed by the darkness, and the other party exposed by the light from the lanterns, there was no difficulty to discern, even at a distance, that it was composed of two French gens d'armes, probably conveying a prisoner.

Bernard, in his roamings through life, had learned to exercise caution ; and to Jaromir, in his calling as an officer of light dragoons, it had become, as it were, a second nature always to observe the tactics of a patrol when in the dark. A mutual nudge was all that was necessary, therefore, to induce them to suffer the people with the lanterns first to come nearer, and to scrutinise them from some dark nook by the wayside. Judge their amazement, as the gens d'armes drew nearer, to discover Louis walking between them—a surprise not at all relieved by Bernard recognising in a fourth person, closely wrapped up in a large foul-weather cloak, and also carrying a lantern, the identical individual on horseback whom they had encountered in the garden that afternoon !

A slight pressure of the hand was sufficient to keep the young men perfectly still. Holding their breath, and standing close to the trunk of a tree, they let the party pass by about fifty paces in advance, when they followed them very cautiously, the feeble

light thrown back from the lanterns assisting them materially in keeping unseen. Bernard had too much confidence in Louis, and had known him too long, not to suspect at once that there must either be some egregious mistake, or, as in those days, alas ! was but too common, some political move or villany at the bottom ; which last, in fact, appeared the most likely, from the presence and co-operation of the ubiquitous stranger. This idea fixed itself so strongly in his mind, that he determined, at all hazards, to liberate Louis from his sudden captivity. In those times, the only possible means of rescuing the victim from the grasp of the minions in power, was to seize the very first moment to deliver him, when probably he might be saved, and remain unmolested thereafter. He whispered, therefore, to Jaromir :

"I am afraid there is some villainous plot going on. Could we only at this instant manage to rescue our friend from the hands of these men, we would soon find means to save him from farther harm. Will you assist me in the enterprise ?"

Jaromir, well knowing what risk he incurred by meddling with a guard, especially with the almost sacred persons of the French gens d'armes, viewed the undertaking very questionably ; but, on the other hand, he felt so strong a friendship for Louis, that he thought he could not refuse ; he possessed, besides, that buoyant quality of youth which scans only the surface in calculating the consequences of actions, or may be it was merely a deeply-engraved trait of the Polish character, which boldly rushes into a daring scheme, and either will not, or cannot stop to weigh the issue. He gave his hearty assent to the proposal.

"Well, then," said Bernard, "you perceive the road is elevated ; here, on the right of us, runs a small ditch along the bottom of the hill, deep enough, I'll warrant, to keep the fellow who falls into it floundering about for some time ; on the left, the road slopes down. Now, if we softly follow the gens d'armes, and suddenly rush upon them, we can tumble one into the ditch, the other down the slope, and then together topple over the man in the big cloak. We shall in this way gain time enough to make our escape with Louis."

There was no need for farther parley. On tiptoe, but swiftly, the two friends followed the party conducting the prisoner ; unperceived, they approached within ten steps of them. Louis walked, as before, between the two gens d'armes, the one on the left treading close to the edge of the path, and the other to the right, near the ditch. A few paces in advance was the man in the cloak with the lantern.

"I take the one to the right," whispered Bernard. "Now!"

With the impetuosity of the war-steed, the spirited assailants rushed on together, at the same time raising a horrible cry. Before the gens d'armes could turn round, the two runners charged upon them with such irresistible force that they dropt right and left, as their assailants intended. According to the preconcerted plan, the young men were now about to rush upon the suspicious stranger; but he saved them the trouble, for he no sooner heard the shout than he hurled the lantern far from him, and ran with all his might down the road. Bernard did not think it best to pursue him, but cried hastily to Louis, who stood transfixed with astonishment:

"We are your good friends; fly with us for your life!"

Louis, recognising his deliverers, did not tarry; the lantern of the gens d'armes having been extinguished in its fall, favored their singular escape by an impenetrable darkness.

The three young men now hurried back in the dark, on the way they had come. Bernard, at a full run, called out to the others to follow him.

They had already run a good piece, when they heard two shots fired behind them. These proceeded from the gens d'armes, who discharged their carbines in the direction of the fugitives.

"Fire away!" cried Bernard; "we don't even hear the whizzing of your balls, much less do they hit us!"

From the distance of the shots, as well as from the time elapsed before they had been fired, the runners might with safety conclude that they were now perfectly secure. Still they continued their route with all possible speed. They came to a side path leading to the left up the mountain, which Bernard followed; having ascended about a hundred paces, he said:

"Let us go slower, or else we shall lose breath and strength!—for the present we are safe; but don't speak."

They now clambered up the path in silence. Bernard listened now and then to detect if they were pursued. All was still. In a quarter of an hour, when they had reached a thickly-grown spot of brush-wood, they could reasonably consider themselves clear from all harm.

"What are we to do now?" he asked, as he came to a halt.

"First of all," said Louis, eagerly seizing the hands of his companions, "accept my warmest thanks, dearest friends. But explain to me how you became aware of my arrest, and by what miracle you have effected my rescue."

Bernard then related the accidental dis-

covery, and explained the secret motives of his resolution.

"You are indeed both my friends," replied Louis, much moved; "for I believe that I was near my destruction. But what have you not ventured!" he added, with apprehension, as he embraced them both warmly.

"Ventured?" said Bernard; "nothing that I am aware of! The whole affair, at the worst, is only a student's freak, for which they cannot hang us, even if they should apprehend us. But how can that be? Who knows, or suspects us? We might now boldly run right under the noses of the two gens d'armes, and neither of them would be the wiser on the score of knowing to whom they are indebted for the bath in the mud-puddle. But what could have induced them to lay their hands on you, Louis?"

"The tale is wonderful enough, and yet, an enigma to myself. It is so involved that I had rather tell it to you more at leisure, at some other opportunity."

"Very well;" Bernard answered. "But still we must know the leading points now, so as to be able to act upon them and to determine where you may be safest. Can you, do you think, return to Dresden without danger?"

"I believe not," answered Louis: "but I will give you an outline of my story. You remember the man in the garden, whom we thought we had seen before?"

"Certainly: go on."

"As I came down the mountain, and had reached the ruins, I found there a great many people, who had sought shelter from the rain. Naturally, I looked about to see whether my mother and my aunt were among them. I did not find them. Most of the people were servants belonging to the court. I then went on my way, but had scarcely walked a hundred steps from the ruins, when a French gens d'arme followed after me, and accosted me rather roughly with his—*'Bon Soir, Monsieur!'* I returned the salute, and was about to walk on, when he declared that I must follow him. I asked why, and where to? It was not his business, he said, to answer these questions. Unconscious of any crime, I resolved, however reluctantly, to obey,—for I expected that the whole affair was a misunderstanding, which would be cleared up in one moment. On looking round, however, I observed a man in regiments, and another gens d'arme, hastily following us. On their coming nearer, I recognised that stranger. He came up to me, and said, with a sort of cynical smile: '*You must follow us to attend a short examination, sir!*' '*I have already heard so, with astonishment,*' I answered, '*and should be exceeding glad to know why!*' As he did

not answer, I continued : 'I cannot suppose that there is any other than a mistake or vindictiveness, and hope to obtain satisfaction for this shameful treatment!'"

"It will all be right,' he said, coolly, and we proceeded farther down, towards the palace.

"I was very glad to meet no one; for I need not assure you that I felt ashamed enough, walking in this way between two French bailiffs. Having arrived at the great gate of the palace, I was conducted aside into a small porter's-lodge, where, under guard of the two gens d'armes, I had to wait more than an hour's time, during which, the stranger absented himself. I employed this time in coming to a decision, as to my course of conduct. (I resolved to enter upon no explanation, but merely to protest against the outrage of my arrest. I considered, of course, particularly how to spare my mother the alarm which the case at all events must cause her. But, as you will hear, all that I could do, in that respect, was forestalled. After an hour's absence, the stranger again appeared. It was already quite dark, so I do not exactly know which way they carried me; but I believe it was into one of the offices of the palace. After ascending some narrow stairs, and then going down a rather extensive corridor, I was led into a room where I found the same man with the cross of the Legion of Honor whom we met in the garden this afternoon. He spoke nothing but French. I complained of my arrest. He smiled, shrugged his shoulders, and said that I knew the reason of my arrest very well. He then proceeded to a formal examination; in the first place enquiring my name. I declared that I would not give it before I knew the grounds upon which I had been seized."

"You are accused of high-treason," he returned, impetuously.

"And by whom?" I asked.

"By this gentleman," he answered, pointing to the stranger.

"I do not know that gentleman," I said, in a ruffled mood.

"So much the better does he, therefore, know you," replied my inquisitor, with violence.

"Well, then," said I, also much excited; "if that gentleman accuses me of high-treason, he will be able, no doubt, to inform you of my name, also. I decline giving it myself, because I do not acknowledge the tribunal before which I stand."

The stranger did not know what to answer to these words, but stood irresolute and embarrassed. Finally, he whispered something in the ear of my self-constituted judge, who then said:

"Of course we know your name; but the

forms of enquiry demand that you declare it yourself."

"Yes; by the forms of a legal enquiry," I answered.

My inquisitor turned scarlet, on hearing this objection. He took a few turns up and down the floor, and then retired with my accuser into an adjoining room. Both appeared again in about a quarter of an hour. The examiner came right up to me with a hang-dog mien, and said :

"You will now be carried to a place, which, perhaps, will have some effect in subduing your obstinacy. You will follow that gentleman."

The thought of my mother and sister, and the anxiety they must endure on my account, then rushed on my mind.

"You will permit me, I trust, to apprise some friends who came with me to this place, of my fate;" I said.

"I cannot permit it," replied the inquisitor.

"How!" said I; "does your administration of justice so strictly shun the light? Such is the course observed by the Inquisition!"

"A prisoner who refuses to tell his name has no possible claim to a favor of this kind."

"Well, then, I will tell my name so soon as I have given information to my friends, and I know that some one is at liberty to protest against this arbitrary violence. I will write two lines: in ten minutes I can have them back-signed. The proof in my hand that my friends are actually apprised of my destiny, and I will answer every reasonable question that may be proposed."

My examiner seemed irresolute what to do. After a short silence, he said :

"Your request is altogether inadmissible; I cannot permit any communication with your friends. For the rest, we will find means, I warrant you, to learn what we want to know. Good bye."

With these words he left. I was very much excited. The idea which I depicted to myself of my mother's grief, if I should thus vanish without a trace, moderated my aversion for the stranger so far that I laid aside all show of defiance, and accosted him in a more gentle mood.

"I hope from your humanity, sir," said I, "that you will at least permit me to send my friends a verbal message, so that they may not suffer needless anxiety on my account."

"I can only discharge my duty," he answered, with freezing coldness.

"And in what does that consist? I hope that I may be allowed to know to what place I am to be conducted."

"You will know well enough, when you see it," was his answer.

"I must confess, that my anger against this wretch, and concern about my friends, brought tears into my eyes. With great difficulty I mastered myself sufficiently not to do or say things which could only have made my situation more hopeless. At this moment, one of the gens d'armes came in, announcing, in a half-whisper, but still so loud that I heard it, that 'the wagon was at the ferry, and would wait on the other side of the Elbe. The boat, also.'

"On receiving this intelligence, we started. You already know my adventures after that; for, on the road which we took, you, my dear friends, became my deliverers."

"The few minutes which we have devoted in listening to your tale, Louis, have not been uselessly spent," said Bernard; "for not till then, could we have formed a plan of operation. It is the greatest luck that you did not disclose your name. They will soon become tired of their search: still it is very hazardous to remain in Dresden. But what under the sun do they want?"

"At the first, I was too exasperated to reflect calmly on the subject. Now, however, I have my surmises; but for the present I can enter into no explanations. Perhaps the whole affair may be made the stepping-stone to my happiness, and that in the most wonderful manner."

"Nothing could give me more pleasure than that," replied Bernard. "In the mean time we must think of others. Your sister is up at the tower, in a very unpleasant situation, and your mother below, perhaps in one no better. We were going down to gather intelligence, and to bring up the carriage. This is the first thing we must do. As regards yourself, I think it would be best to go right up to the tower, and wait for us there. When there, you can say, in excuse for your long absence, that something broke about the carriage. Tell them, also, that we met you, and undertook to arrange matters, while you hastened on to bring them intelligence. Meanwhile, I will despatch everything down here; but on no consideration tell them a word about your real adventure. And now, may God be with you—for we have not a moment to lose."

"Oh, my friends!" cried Louis; "how shall I thank you? Who can estimate the misery from which you have saved me?"

"Never mind," said Bernard, "thank fortune, and not us."

With these words, he seized Jaromir by the arm, and both hastened down the mountain.

"I would give my best picture," he said to Jaromir in descending, "to fall in with the two gens d'armes, and hear them ask us to put them on the track of the two rascals

that turned them out of the saddle contrary to all rules of the tournament."

Louis in the mean time continued his way. As he came near the tower, a sudden "Who goes there?" was called in a prompt, firm tone. He recognised the voice of Rasinski, who, taking turns with Boleslaus, performed the duty of sentinel.

"Friend!" answered Louis gladly.

"At last!" was answered in return, and Rasinski gave him joyfully his hand. "How glad your sister will be; she has been so alarmed about you!"

In a kind of triumph he led the returning wanderer toward the tower, where the girls were sitting in anxious silence, except Mary, who was reclining, the pain of her foot requiring that position. "Art thou here at last, Louis?" she cried on hearing his voice, reaching him her hand; "how couldst thou leave us so long in anxious suspense?"

Louis apologised for his tardiness in the best manner he could, and assured the girls of a speedy deliverance from their odd kind of imprisonment.

"Oh, now that thou art with us, and mother knows where we are, we will wait cheerfully," answered Mary.

She asked him to sit down by her, but he declined it, alleging that he was soaking wet and would rather keep stirring. The motive, however, was his inward anxiety whether Bernard would come or not; he hoped better to hide his feelings by walking back and forth with the men outside, for the rain had long ceased.

An uneasy half-hour having passed, the sound of a whip and the rattling of a carriage were heard. Now the gleam of lanterns was seen among the trees and bushes, and in a few minutes Jaromir arrived, bringing the news that both of the elder ladies were coming up, so as to save a piece of considerably round-about way. Immediately one of the vehicles drew up; the coachman jumped nimbly down;—it was Bernard.

"Here we are," he cried, "and I act as postilion for the very satisfactory reason that one of the two has made himself so tipsy that he is good for nothing. We left him in the straw, and I took the liberty to constitute myself heir to his mantle, every stitch in my jacket being as wet as if I had been taking a swim with the fishes. I am almost dry now, and you, Louis, must have some dry covering."

So saying, he took off the cloak and threw it around Louis, whispering in his ear, "This is your disguise; they can't know what is going on. You must drive the carriage back; the coachmen are bribed, and know what they are to do."

Louis thanked his friend by a pressure of

the hand for his clever precautions. And now, the two mothers also arrived in safety ; all trouble was lightened from the hearts of the three girls, and they gave themselves up to unrestrained joy ; yea, they even went so far as to be a little proud of the day's romantic adventures, and were not the last to regale themselves with the good wine which Bernard had found in the carriage.

Finally they prepared for departing. The state of Mary's foot, as well as the lateness of the hour, seemed to dictate the propriety of a separation of ladies and gentlemen. Bernard, moreover, had good reasons for promoting this arrangement, as in case of an untoward accident, it would be much better that all the men were in the same carriage, and in this way the carriage of the ladies would hardly suffer any delay. The men now being by themselves, Bernard briefly recounted Louis' adventure. They all agreed on acting in strictest harmony, and Rasinski assured them that his Colonel's uniform would be sufficient protection from any danger of the moment. Louis pulled the seal-skin cap of the coachman deep over his eyes, wrapped himself closely in the cloak, and sprang on the coach-box. While they drove along Bernard entered more into detail, and explained particulars so fully, that no danger could be apprehended from misunderstanding or ignorance.

The passage down was effected without accident. They arrived at the ferry and crossed the Elbe without hindrance.

They had got about half way, when Bernard called out to Louis to stop.

"It is very probable that you are entirely unknown, but it is not quite certain. What if they were to seek you in your mother's house ? At least it would be the most prudent plan not to pass the night there, but keep yourself invisible to-morrow, until we have reconnoitred the ground. I will find some plausible excuse ; but just now you must hail your colleague, the other coachman, and ask him to stop, and then every thing else will be easy enough."

Louis did as Bernard desired. The latter left the carriage, went up to the ladies, and begged of them not to take offence if they were left to ride alone ; but the horses of the other carriage were so weary, that they would not stir from the spot, and it was therefore necessary to stop for an hour to rest and feed. He took the coachman aside, gave him some money, and said : "Fear nothing ; we will follow you at a short distance, but we have our reasons why we wish to avoid arriving at the same time with the ladies."

The coachman growled out something like a "Very well," mounted his box, and drove on.

As if now first remembering it, Bernard ran after the carriage, and called out through the window : "One thing more ! We shall in all probability arrive much later than you ; so Louis will not disturb you, but stay over night with us."

Without waiting for an answer, he hastened back to his friends. "All is right now," he cried, in high spirits. Let who will come to besiege, storm, blockade, or starve out the fortress, they will perish under our walls of defence."

Five minutes after the ladies' carriage had left, the gentlemen also drove on, keeping at some distance behind, but never so great but that in case of need they might lend their immediate assistance.

Nothing suspicious met them on the road ; they reached the gates of Dresden without obstruction. The ladies passed the gate without hindrance, but their own carriage was stopped.

A police officer and a gens d'arme stepped up, and asked whence they came and who they were. Pursuant to agreement, Rasinski undertook to be spokesman, and answered. The Count's uniform and rank appeared to produce their impression ; the officials stepped back a little and conversed together in an under-tone. Bernard, who did not lose sight of them, detected a third person, enveloped in a cloak, join them. His practised eye, observant specially of drapery and costume, recognised with tolerable accuracy, in the shrouded figure, the arch enemy of Louis. They were therefore, indeed, in a dangerous predicament. At length Rasinski leaned out of the carriage and cried : "What have we to wait here for now ? It is late ; be quick and despatch us !"

There was still a few moments' delay, the gens d'arme then came up, looked into the carriage, lantern in hand, and said civilly :

"Excuse us, Colonel, but we have orders to communicate something of utmost importance to a person coming from Pillnitz, as soon as he arrives at the gate ; it is only my duty to see if he is one of these gentlemen."

"The devil take you !" cried the Colonel. "These two are my comrades—of the same regiment—and the other is my friend, and none of us have any intelligence to expect here at the gate at this time of night. Let us alone. Drive on, coachman !"

Louis cracked his whip and drove smartly ahead. Without farther molestation they reached the Hotel de Pologne, where Rasinski lodged with his two subalterns. Louis was to remain there over night, while Bernard undertook to see the carriage returned to its owner. Further consultation and measures were to be attended to as early as possible next morning.

CHAPTER XV.

BERNARD got up early next morning to look for Louis. His way led him down Castle-street, and he was pondering as he went what was best to be done in this vexatious business and whether Louis would not do well to absent himself from Dresden, at least for a short time, when he brushed rather rudely against a passer-by, seemingly also in a great hurry. Both mechanically seized their hats, in order to exchange their polite apologies, when Bernard saw standing before him the very stranger who was the origin of this mischievous affair.

None but a person of the experience and presence of mind which Bernard possessed, could have kept his countenance under such a *contretemps*. He apologised for his rudeness with the greatest affability; the rapid shade of embarrassment which flitted over his features might be attributed to the suddenness of the concussion, as soon as to the feeling inspired by the sight of the equivocal stranger.

The person answered with equal politeness. Bernard scrutinised his countenance, to discover whether he was recognised or not. It appeared to him, as if the stranger wavered. Suddenly the thought darted into his mind: "Perhaps I may succeed in drawing out this fellow, and make use of him against himself?" Columbus did not feel more elated at the thought which revealed to him a new world, than Bernard did at this idea.

"You are a stranger to me, it is true," he answered, "but still I think we must have met before somewhere."

"It appears just so to me, also," said the stranger, with that expression of uneasiness which accompanies uncertainty."

"By Jove! now I remember!" cried Bernard. "Were you not in the garden at Pillnitz, yesterday? Did we not meet you just by those beautiful elders?"

"True!" exclaimed the stranger, his face lighting up with malicious joy; "just so. But you were not alone."

"I was with a travelling companion, whom I had met at the inn;" Bernard rejoined, in a light tone. "We afterwards ascended the Porsberg together; but the thunder-storm separated us. Did it overtake you also?"

"A little; but—"

"I had my full share of it," Bernard purposely interrupted. "I got wet to the skin; and to crown the matter, I had no conveyance back; for that vagabond of a hack-driver whom I had engaged, left me in the lurch,—somebody probably offering him higher fare. But I fell in with some French officers, capital fellows, who brought me into Dresden

quite late at night, else I might be sitting on the Porsberg yet. I am just on my way to them now, to deliver my thanks: but as these gentlemen are accustomed to go out quite early in the morning, be so good as to excuse me."

With these words, Bernard made a movement as if to depart; but the stranger took him by the hand.

"One word, I pray you. Who was, may I ask, your companion in the garden?"

"Really," answered Bernard, "that I can tell you as well as not. I travel a great deal, back and forth. Some time ago, I met him in Manheim, and then, a few days since, I found him at the table d'hôte, in Leipzig. We drank coffee together at Rosenthal—went to the opera, and had an oyster-supper afterwards. Yesterday, again, we met by chance in the garden at Pillnitz, and were again separated by chance, in the storm. That is all that I know about him. Of his name and condition I can give you no information—for what traveller troubles himself about these particulars? But if you are interested, I can put you in the way of finding him—for we have agreed on a rendezvous at Hegereuter's, in the garden, at Plau, this afternoon."

"At what hour, if I may be so bold as to ask?"

"Four o'clock. Perhaps you would like to make one of the party; if so, give me your address, and I will come and fetch you; for I have everything ready, and know the way perfectly."

"You would oblige me very much. But allow me to save you that trouble, sir, and rather to call upon you. Will you please to let me know where you stay?"

"On no account can I allow that! But to decide the matter, let us meet at three o'clock at Longo's, the Italian confectioner, close by here, in Castle-street. For the present must take my leave. I hope to have the pleasure of soon seeing you again."

Without staying for an answer, Bernard turned on his heel and made down the street; but only for the purpose of slipping into one of the nearest houses, and from thence, with argus eyes, to watch the movements of the ambiguous stranger. As soon as he thought it safe, he followed him, determined not to lose the track. The gentleman entered a respectable-looking house in Castle-street. Bernard happened to have some acquaintance with the porter of the house, and resolved to speak with him. He followed the stranger, therefore, to the door of the house, and asked the porter if he knew him.

"Not by name," he answered; "but he lives here, and belongs to the service of the Baron St. Luces, I believe, as his secretary."

Bernard now knew all. With arrow-speed

he hastened to Rasinski. He found him at breakfast with Louis and the two young officers. His story was eagerly listened to. At the name of St. Luces, Rasinski's brow contracted in deep furrows.

"That name bodes you no good, my friend!" he said, turning to Louis. "The man is part councillor of Legation part police-officer, part spy. Very able, but extremely intriguing and avaricious he is indispensable, but despised. His legitimate name is Rumigny; but having brought himself into notice by his dirty services, he has been elevated to the rank of what is called nobility, an order which, since the Empire, has shot up so luxuriantly in France. I know him but too well. But what in the world can he want with you?"

Louis had, as yet, disclosed to no one his adventure in Italy, to which, naturally, he ascribed his arrest. He now related the whole in detail, carefully concealing everything trenching on the state of his own heart. Bernard listened in fixed astonishment.—Louis, then, also knew this mysterious being. He had been with her, on so intimate a footing! Oh, how deeply, then, must that sweet image be engraved on the heart of his friend! To him this same image had appeared and vanished in an instant; but now, when he looked upon his friend in so familiar a relation to the original of his ideal, his heart was deeply moved, and he felt former wounds, only slightly cicatrised, bleeding afresh. Yet, in his usual manner, he concealed his feelings under the cap and bell of the harlequin.

"By heavens! a droll adventure; admirable!" he exclaimed. "Would there be any sense in troubling one's-self about thee any farther. I could let myself be hanged ten times over, to have a promenade over the Simplon, in the delicious Italian night-air, by the side of such a divine creature, who had adopted me as her brother. Who would care a straw after such an adventure?"

"Jesting apart," said Rasinsky; "I fear the thing will take a very grave turn—for, I believe that, unknowingly, you have performed a deed which will hardly ever be forgiven. At all events, you must remain concealed for the present, till we are better instructed. No one sees you here. I would also advise your friend not to resort to the rendezvous, before I have gained farther intelligence. This I will do, forthwith."

"I fear nothing, as regards myself," answered Louis; "but what shall I say to my mother and my sister?"

"The whole truth, dear friend," replied Rasinski; "for if your friends should be left in ignorance, or be quieted with false information, they might become your betrayers,

against their own will. It is true as yet it seems they know only your person, and not your name; but how easily may not that be found out! I will take it upon myself to put your worthy mother in possession of all necessary particulars; and then to examine the state of circumstances, to do which, I possess the very best means."

Louis silently gave his hand in token of thanks to his resolute friend. Bernard stamped on the floor with his heel, in vexation; while Jaromir and Boleslaus exhibited the most friendly sympathy.

"We must lose no time," said Rasinski, rising; "I will set out immediately. You will do better to step into the next room, and suffer yourself not to be seen by any one. I go first, my dear friend, to your mother; circumstances will plead an excuse for my early visit. Then I will begin my inquiries. You shall hear from me at the very first opportunity."

He was about going, when he stopped at the door, as if struck with some sudden idea.

"Yes, that is best," he said; "I must beg of you one thing, without which I can do nothing; namely, a couple of lines, which may be my credentials with your mother."

"She will place in you implicit confidence," answered Louis.

"Place it in me yourself, first," said Rasinski; "the lines which I ask for are necessary, in a certain case."

"With pleasure," answered Louis.

"Well, then, sit down and write: 'Dear mother: I pray you to place unlimited confidence in the bearer, and to follow his directions.'"

Louis started, but wrote as Rasinski requested. The latter immediately left. Jaromir and Boleslaus did the same soon after, as they had to assist Rasinski in forming the new free-corps.

Bernard remained with Louis. For a while they walked up and down the room together, in silence—Louis, busily cogitating upon his situation; and Bernard, because the dormant feeling lurking in the depths of his soul, had been freshly awakened in all its strength. For nearly an hour they interchanged only detached and short sentences on unimportant subjects. But the sound of approaching footsteps put an end to all farther conversation.

CHAPTER XVI.

RASINSKI entered. His eye was sad, his brow furrowed.

"Friends, I believe you are men," he began, "and know how to bear up under adversities of fate. Your affair is in a bad state, and that through you, my dear friend," turning to Bernard, "for the porter of the house where St. Luces lodges has betrayed you."

"The devil! and how is that possible?" cried Bernard.

"In the simplest way in the world. After you had made enquiries about the stranger, whom I now can name to you as Monsieur Beaucaire, St. Luces' secretary, and was leaving the house; he was standing on the balcony above. Of course, he was surprised to find that you had followed him; he therefore in his turn sought information about you. By the most unlucky chance in the world, it so happened too, that this same porter was yesterday also in Pillnitz, and saw you there walking arm in arm with our friend Louis; whom unfortunately he knows but too well, as you met St. Luces and Beaucaire. The former is the greatest villain on earth, and the latter seems to be no better. Nothing was wanting, then, for them to learn every thing, except the well-laid plot, which they guess at, by which Louis was so boldly delivered out of their clutches."

"I am almost ready to drive a ball through my head!" cried Bernard.

"And my mother?" said Louis.

"Is already informed of every thing."

"Has she been in any way molested?"

"Not yet, for the porter, fortunately, though he knows your name, is ignorant of your residence. They are now busy finding out that. It will take them some hours to do it, and these we must improve. I have already formed a plan, and will soon have the necessary preparations made. These hints must suffice you for the present, for I must away again this minute."

"Wait one moment!" cried Louis. "How would it do to release all of you who have become entangled in my affair from all annoyance and responsibility by simply taking the step of voluntarily presenting myself for examination?"

"I would not answer for your life, my young friend," answered Rasinski gravely; "for you have, as I have been informed, assisted in the escape of one of the most dangerous secret agents of our enemies in Italy, whose track they had found and were pursuing, and with whom they were sure of finding some most important papers."

"Did they tell you who this agent was?" asked Louis quickly, hoping to receive some clue to the mystery of the lost one.

"No," answered Rasinski, "I asked about it, but the answer was, that it is a diplomatic secret, known probably to none but St. Luces. The circumstances are not

yet fully developed, and the whole may remain a mystery for a length of time. Do you really know nothing on that point?"

"Not the least," answered Louis; "so in that respect, at least, I am perfectly guiltless."

"Knowing or not knowing, even were they to believe you, cannot avail any thing. Our articles of war award you death. But, take courage! you may be called upon to make some sacrifice but I think that I can save you. For the present, farewell. You shall soon hear from me again. One thing more, you may trust my young comrades unreservedly; they are as true and devoted to me as if they were my own sons."

He left.

Louis and Bernard remained another hour in anxious perplexity. At the expiration of this time Rasinski returned.

"I will," he began, "announce to you your fate without circumlocution, for ye are men. I can save you if you will join my free-corps; the uniform may open the way for you out of Dresden, for I know of no other which the inclinations of your enemies have not already barred against you; and you will, moreover, in this way be free from all further search; for once in the army, you are under my protection and care. I know that the alternative is hard, but it is the only one."

"And could we not leave the city under the uniform, and then take some other road?" asked Bernard, in whose mind there arose a certain suspicion against Rasinski.

"I can only give passports to Warsaw. I have the permission and means of doing so. There you must report yourselves to the commander of the division to which I belong. Should you follow any other route than that prescribed you by my passport, you would be taken up as deserters; I myself would not be able to shield you any longer. And in what other manner would you escape out of Dresden? Where would you go? With the police you are already spotted men and denounced as fugitives or skulking delinquents. The authorities every where receive orders for your apprehension; there is not a single nook on the entire continent, where the power of the French police would not reach you—with the exception of the army, where, in the first place they will not seek you, and where, in the second place, the immediate interference of the commander frustrates all search."

"I shall know how to submit to that which cannot be avoided," said Louis firmly; "but my mother—my sister, they will be left inconsolable! their sorrow will cause me indescribable anguish! and thee, my Bernard! Oh! that I should plunge thee into

his abyss!" Here he turned away his head, and put his hand sorrowfully to his brow.

Bernard kept his eyes fixed on the ground, gloomy and in silence; after a few moments had passed in this manner, he began:

" Soldier or galley-slave, according to my notion, is all one and the same. For my part, I should with pleasure sooner let myself be hanged. But even if fate did not now join our destinies together, if I could fly to England free as a bird—here is my hand upon it—I would don the livery and be thy comrade. I require nothing more than that thou believest me."

Louis gave him his hand in silence, but turned his head away in deep emotion.

" You will learn to like your lot yet, my friends," said Rasinski; " for I hope you will become acquainted only with the agreeable and glorious realities of our profession. You enter as volunteers; by some management I will keep you near my own person. We will live together as friends and messmates, and lodge beneath the same tent. I might raise you to the rank of commissioned officers on the spot; but it would be against my conscience and your own choice; for as those in command, even of a small number, you would assume responsibilities from which the Emperor himself could not absolve you. Not to run such risks, therefore, you must learn to understand the service and know what war is. You cannot be stimulated by military ambition; the relations, therefore, which I shall select for you, will be far better. Your education secures you free intercourse with the officers; my friendship will procure for you those other privileges and advantages which are valued by cultivated minds. When a few months shall have rolled by, some means may perhaps be found to bring all to rights again. Look upon your new pursuit merely as a disguise, which you have assumed only temporarily; at all events, you would be obliged to elude the prying eyes of your enemies by some kind of masquerading or other. That which I propose seems to me at least the most honorable, the easiest to be endured, and what is particularly to be considered—the only safe one."

The good sense and good will manifested by Rasinski's speech, inspired confidence even in the stubborn Bernard, and in some degree allayed his violent opposition. Louis confessed, that there was no choice left him; With the aid of a strong and enlightened judgment he knew how to yield to necessity. But it pained his noble soul exceedingly to involve mother, sister, and friend in this common calamity.

" Does my mother already know," he ask-

ed in a tremulous voice, " all that has happened?"

" She is sufficiently prepared," answered Rasinski, " and has submitted to the stern decree of necessity with a fortitude which I must admire. Your sister is much more deeply affected."

" Mary!" exclaimed Louis in agony. " Oh, I know well what it is that particularly wounds her! That true German heart!"

Dark cloudy shadows lingered on Bernard's brow.

" But will they not lay my escape to the charge of my mother?" continued Louis. " Will she not have to dread the vengeance of those in power? Should I learn that she experiences the smallest insult, I will return!"

" Be easy, my friend," answered Rasinski; " I have already arranged every thing, so that your friends shall have nothing to fear."

Bernard was silent; in his soul, comprehensively regarding every circumstance, the terrible suspicion had been engendered that Rasinski was insincere. He was almost resolved to obtain certainty on this point by one bold step, and to declare that he would not obey, not become a soldier, but look out for himself. Only his previously formed determination to share Louis' fate, were it ever so hard, kept him from committing this rashness. " I will take my share in whatever happens. I partake of the destiny and choice of my friend; more I cannot promise," he said after a few seconds' pondering, reaching the Count his hand.

Rasinski suspected what took place in his mind; for a few moments it vexed him, but his magnanimous spirit forgave the wrong done him by the suspicion almost as quickly as he had discovered it.

" Listen to what has been done," said he. " Jaromir and Boleslaus are already informed of everything. I have procured a courier's pass for Jaromir, under the pretext that I must send him before me with all possible speed, on account of the organization of my regiment. You both receive passes from me as your chief, and go with him. These legitimate documents will be perfectly satisfactory. Boleslaus, whose stature much resembles yours, has caused a French regimental tailor to measure him for two uniforms, which will be ready this afternoon, so that you may pass unknown out of the city, even in broad day. As to money and other necessities, it will be my care to provide, when first only you are in safety, and for the present Jaromir is fully supplied."

The latter just then entered the room. Like most other young men, he was in ecstacies at having been entrusted with this com-

mission. He greeted his new comrades most cordially, and promised them the happiest days.

"You do not yet know what a glorious thing war is," he exclaimed. "It is very pleasant here in Dresden—yea, wonderfully charming," he said, coloring up, probably thinking of some one of the beautiful girls with whom he had become acquainted on the preceding day; "but still I would not exchange the sweetest sojourn here, for my horse and my sword. The choicest blessings would render me miserable, were I never again to join in the fray! And then you should see Warsaw, my native city! Oh, how it will please you!"

The amiable frankness of the youth did not fail to make an impression. Boleslaus also soon returned, bringing the intelligence that the uniforms would be ready precisely at six o'clock. This serious young man, however much attached to the profession of arms, felt the weight of the unhappy circumstances in which Louis and Bernard were placed, and granted them his most hearty sympathy. Thus the time passed, in the most cordial intimacy. At last the hour of departure arrived. The uniforms came. Bernard and Louis were duly clothed in their new habiliments. Jaromir prepared for his journey. The postilion sounded his horn, they mounted the vehicle, and rolled away through the midst of the city and the walking crowds of promenaders outside the gates, without one in that crowd suspecting what a sad and singular destiny lay hid beneath those rich and dashing uniforms.

CHAPTER XVII.

IT was late on a Sunday afternoon that Jaromir, Louis and Bernard, from a neighboring eminence, caught the first glimpse of the spires of Warsaw. The road for a considerable time had wound through a dark pine forest, which excluded every prospect. It now made a bend, and ascended a hill overgrown with fern and blackberry bushes. From its summit, a widely-extended plain was seen; at the farther extremity of which arose the stately palaces and towers of the city of Warsaw. The fiery Jaromir called out a fierce "Halt!" to the postilion, and with eyes kindling with exultation, sprang from the vehicle.

"That is my native city!" he cried; "for eight years I have not seen it; but still I know every house, every gable-end, every spire in it. Come, my friends, come, and let

us walk up the hill. Here runs a path among the bushes, which leads through the meadows, and then again into the great road. As we go along, I will point out to you the most prominent objects of the place all around; far as your eye can reach, you see not a church-steeple where there are not Polish heroes buried who bravely fought for their country. Oh! when will this land see the seeds of liberty thrive which our fathers have manured with their blood! Look at that village right before us. That is the Wielka Wola, where Kosciusko fought in 1794; to the left, behind that pine grove, you see the pointed tower of Opalin, and farther down that of Wawrysczew. At both places flowed Polish blood in that same year, and at Opalin fell my uncle, Casimir, Count Brzescinski! Oh, my friends, here many a one lies buried who merits our tears! I wish we had arrived here at some other hour, for it bodes me no good to see the towers of my native city illuminated by the setting sun."

He shook his head mournfully as a shadow of patriotic sorrow clouded his open, cheerful brow.

"Thou art an unskilled soothsayer," cried Bernard, in a lively mood; "I will expound our advent in a different fashion. Dost thou not return to thy father-land in the spring of the year, when every plant buds and blossoms anew? Do not flowers spring up on the very graves, and did not every orchard which we passed to-day wave like a sea of blossoms, when the gentle breeze plays through the tree-tops? Surely, they stood there adorned like young brides, with their green garlands of tender leaves partly hidden under a delicate veil of flowers. In the autumn, I promise you rich and ripe fruits; then you will gather the increase, and celebrate a harvest-home, which shall send joy and jubilee through the length and breadth of the land!"

"Thou art a prophet!" cried Jaromir, vehemently, clasping Bernard to his breast, and planting a burning kiss on his brow; "if thy words are fulfilled, may the jubilee sound over my grave, if I can only be assured that I shall sleep in the free and happy soil of Poland!"

During this demonstration, the young men had descended the hill, and were now proceeding on a pleasant path through rich meadow-lands—Jaromir continuing to direct their attention to points in the immediate vicinity rendered remarkable in history, at the same time recounting those exploits by which the Polish name had been immortalized. After a good half-hour's walk, they regained the high-road, mounted their carriage, and drove rapidly towards the gates of the capital.

On the other side of Wielka Wola, the

landscape became more animated and diversified by numerous passengers passing to and fro on foot, on horseback, and in carriages and wagons. Jaromir drew his flashing black eyes eagerly around, in hope to discover some friend or acquaintance. Fortune, however, did not seem to favor him much. Somewhat vexed, he exclaimed :

" True enough, eight years makes one a stranger in his own country ; it appears I know nobody here, and still less am I known by any one ! "

He had scarcely uttered the words, when a female voice from a carriage coming up from behind, and passing them, uttered :

" Count Jaromir ! is it possible ? or do I deceive myself ? "

Jaromir quickly turned around on hearing his name pronounced, and, forgetting almost that he was on the public highway, and in the company of strangers, he cried out loudly :

" Countess Micielska !—God in heaven ! do you know me still ? "

The coachmen, seeing that a conversation had begun between Jaromir and the lady, stopped their horses without further orders. The Countess was a woman of a noble and majestic person ; she might be somewhat over thirty, but her black and piercing eyes glistened yet with the fire of youth under the high and snow-white forehead, surrounded with glossy curls of rich dark-brown hair. In her youth she must have been of ravishing beauty. Bernard's artistical eye had recorded her as Rasinski's sister before Jaromir had found time to introduce her as such. He delivered her an open letter from Rasinski, which in a few words explained his connexion with the friends and recommended them to a hospitable welcome.

" How glad I am," said the Countess, warmly, after hastily perusing the missive, " that I happened to encounter you directly on your arrival ! Of course you will take up your residence with me ; your time, I fear, will only be too limited ; you cannot, then, complain if I wish to improve every leisure moment, in order to obtain intelligence of my brother, and of the fate of so many dear and esteemed countrymen. On that account you must overlook my selfishness if I make you my constant companions, or, if you choose, prisoners in my house."

She uttered these kind words, under whose modest guise she veiled her hospitable intent, apparently more with cordiality than friendship, so that all were sensible that it was to her a most joyful event to meet her young countryman, and to welcome him and his comrades to her house. She replied to Jaromir's ardent thanks by saying that she would hasten forward to prepare for the re-

ception of her guests. Her coachman put her handsome greys into a brisk trot, the Countess giving a friendly bow as she drove by.

" An excellent omen," cried Bernard—" which is worth more, I ween, than the twelve vultures Romulus saw on the Aventine hill, though a flight of birds hardly ever prognosticated great things. In a city to which we are made welcome by such a Juno, all Olympus certainly must open its doors."

Jaromir smiled.

Our friends arrived at the city gate, where, being strangers, they experienced some delay ; it was therefore night-fall when they drove up before the palace of the Countess. It was a spacious edifice, built in a noble but somewhat antique style. Two lackeys sprang to the steps, another received the travellers and conducted them to the apartment prepared for their reception.

" The Countess," said the valet, " begs the gentlemen to make themselves comfortable, and then, as soon as convenient, they will please to join her in the saloon."

The travellers were quickly ready with their toilets—that is, they had put on the uniforms of the new regiment that was in process of organization. It had previously been agreed upon that Louis and Bernard should lay aside their real names and adopt others. The first, by a slight transposition of letters, had taken the name of Soren ; Bernard, in commemoration of an adventure once at Loch Lomond, in Scotland, and being addicted to singularity, gave himself out as Count Lomond.

They now proceeded to the saloon. The Countess met them at the door, with renewed welcomes. Her tall and majestic figure was now first seen to advantage, and it was observed how striking was the resemblance to her brother, even in that particular.

" Let us be seated," she said, turning to all around. " In the first place, I must know something about those whom I have the honor to entertain as guests, which you will pardon on the score of female curiosity ; for my brother writes merely that Count Jaromir is accompanied by two friends."

" Perhaps we are best qualified to give an account of ourselves," replied Bernard. " In me you behold a half-Scottish nobleman, though born in Germany ; but I really believe that my title of Count is worth no more than my estates, which, indeed, I would not barter too cheaply for the shadowy substances of a magic-lantern. However, those to whom a name is of any value may well be satisfied with that of Count Lomond. For my part, I must confess that I am prouder of my profession than of my rank, and consequently appreciate my pencil much higher than my

escutcheon. You understand, then, most gracious lady, that you see before you a painter, who all his life-time has had the duty imposed upon him of providing for the wants of a nobleman, which, aside from his being profoundly grateful, is the only merit the latter possesses."

"Perhaps, then," said the Countess, smiling, "your pencil might renovate your escutcheon a little."

"Perhaps so," answered Bernard; "but, then, it certainly will be the *last job* which he undertakes."

Without waiting for questioning, Louis announced himself, giving as a reason for his military choice, his general attachment to the profession, and in which his friend shared; his motive in choosing the Polish costume was founded, he said, on his acquaintance with Count Rasinski.

"I am very grateful to you for the thought," said the Countess, "that friendship for my brother moved you to espouse the cause of our country. Yes, we hope and expect much from this war, which is now on the eve of commencing; it will to us be a sacred contest."

"This also is a reason," replied Louis, "why I wished to serve in a Polish division, though a German myself; for the cause of Poland, in this struggle, is unquestionably a just and noble one. As a German, it is not my business to fight for the French Emperor. In the present situation of my father-land, which is almost as wretched as is that of Poland, I cannot fight for him. To the armies of Germany is reserved only the doubtful honor of maintaining the fame of German prowess; there exists no higher aim in this campaign for which the blood of my countrymen may be spilt."

"I even believe," said the Countess, "that the majority would rather be beaten than gain the victory."

"Certainly," answered Louis; "but still I would not count myself among that number. Germany has need of another alliance than that which Russia can offer us. The physical might of this Colossus may benefit my country so far as to snatch it from the foreign influence under which it now groans; but I fear lest this piece of service would cost us too dear, and that in the end, perhaps, we would only have made an exchange of masters. Be it my fate, however, to be subjected to one of the two, no one will blame me for preferring the dominion of a gigantic mind, to the barbarous sway of mere physical force."

"Unquestionably," cried Bernard, taking the matter in his usual lively way, "a man of honor, who is made to decide between the sword and the knout, will choose the former.

We can find no spot better calculated to warn us against Russia, than the capital of Poland, where the wind yet stirs the ashes of the firebrands the barbarous enemy threw within these walls."

"Oh!" exclaimed the Countess, painfully, "we can still feel the cry of distress which then arose; it has not yet died away on the breeze. I was a witness, though young, of those heart-rending scenes; but those spectacles of terror are for ever stamped on my soul. I can easier forget my own name, than the impress of helpless despair which at that time lacerated every heart."

Having uttered these words, she rose, overpowered with excitement, and walked quickly a few times up and down the saloon. The men kept silence. Finally, Jaromir began:

"There is a change coming, and it will be otherwise; the penance laid upon us by the hand of an avenging Nemesis draws to an end. I believe, Countess, that the time is near when we are to be restored from our Babylonian bondage to the fold of our fore-fathers."

The Countess, still pacing the room, seemed to have heard only the first words of Jaromir.

"There is a change coming—it *will* be otherwise!" she repeated. "It *must* be otherwise. And if it continued thus for a thousand years, still the voice in my breast would cry—'It *must* be otherwise!' Or, do you imagine that the mother, who lies bound hand and foot on the ground, while robbers murder her infant, only *believes* in an avenging God? No, she *sees* him; his avenging arm must punish the atrocious deed. He *must* do it, or heaven is deaf to the voice of entreaty, and there is no Ruler above us!"

Uttering these last words, she raised her hand in a half-menacing, half-confident attitude; her eyes rolled, a noble anger flushed her cheek. Only in the moist glistening of a tear, still quivering on her eye-lashes, was to be seen a trace of that gentler mood from which her absorbing passion had forced her.

"How many times have I not undertaken," she said, after a pause, moving her head with sad and self-reproving expression, and letting her upraised hand sink into its natural position, "to make myself mistress of my feelings; yet always are they too strong for me! Oh, this pain does not grow dull in my bosom! It rises afresh with every new sun, and is not abated at his setting."

At this moment there was heard, borne on the mild May breeze of the night, through the open windows of the saloon, a sweet, silvery voice, still at some distance, but quite distinct, blended in sweet melody with the sound of a harp. All listened intently.

"The lovely siren, Frances Alisette," said the Countess, smiling. "This little sorceress has many a time dispelled those gloomy dreams which crowd so heavily about me. She is a young cantatrice, who belongs to the theatre here in Warsaw."

All listened attentively to the sweet songstress; when she ceased, the Countess rang a bell, and spoke a few words to the valet in waiting. He left the room.

"I expect the visit of some female friends this evening," she said, addressing her guests; "I hope it will not be disagreeable to you."

She was interrupted by the opening of a side-door, and the entrance of a young lady attired in a light summer-dress. The gentlemen rose from their seats with polite alacrity, and the Countess rose to meet the newcomer, took her by the hand, and presented her with these words:

"My home-companion; the name I withhold, as Count Jaromir must give us proof whether he possesses a retentive memory."

Jaromir looked at the charming figure with that expression of uncertainty which a challenge of recognition is apt to produce, when one is not very firm in his reminiscences. The noble features of the incognito were suffused with an amiable blush. In her maidenly timidity she presented an almost nun-like appearance, in part occasioned by the large many-folded white veil which she wore. It was fastened by a golden pin in her dark hair, thrown lightly behind the tresses, resting on her cheek, and then floating down over her shoulders almost to the knee. On the other side it covered a freshly-blown rose, its bright colors half-concealed by the fine tissue. The slender stature, more revealed than hid by the ample summer-costume, the shyness and hesitancy observable in the whole attitude, the bashful smile, the timid yet trusting look, completed the bewitching grace so conspicuous in that apparition.

"Indeed," said Jaromir at last, "I feel quite ashamed; if you had any daughters, Countess—"

"You would still guess wrong," she interrupted him.

"I was too much of a child," began the unknown, in a sweet voice, "to dare entertain any claim to be kept in mind, even by so near a relative."

On this hint, Jaromir fastened his eyes more searchingly on the charming creature; she smiled sweetly, as if she would say:—"Well, dost thou not know me yet?" Then suddenly he cried out:

"Lodoiska, is it thou?"

"Found it at last," said the Countess; but Jaromir had seized Lodoiska's hand, kissed it passionately, and then drew the blushing

girl gently towards him, embraced her, and, according to Polish custom, imprinted the unrestrained kiss on her brow. She answered the greeting in a similar manner, a little abashed, but quite cordially.

"The long-deceased parents of these two young people were brothers," the Countess began, in explanation to Louis and Bernard. "The mother on her death-bed bequeathed to me this lovely gift. She was my most intimate friend," she added in a few moments, sorrowfully, keeping her eyes fixed full of benignity on Lodoiska. "My foster-daughter and her Cousin Jaromir were brought up together, and have throughout their early years regarded each other as brother and sister."

And to say the truth, the intimacy between Jaromir and Lodoiska was quickly re-established. Jaromir sat down by Lodoiska, would not let go her hand, and asked her a thousand questions.

Not long after this, the rattling of a carriage was heard, and presently there entered two elderly ladies, whom the Countess introduced as her friends. The conversation now became general; the manners and language were predominantly French; but the Countess, who spoke the German very fluently, often turned to Louis and Bernard, addressing them in that language, because she loved it, and was very much pleased with the noble eloquence in which Louis in particular clothed his thoughts when speaking.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THUS was the party engaged in very animated conversation, in nowise curtailed or embarrassed by the occasional crossings of three distinct languages.

"I should be surprised," said the Countess, during a momentary general pause, "if the Colonel should not come, as he seldom neglects passing an evening with me. I know very well, it is true, that there is no one to fetter him here in the house, but he often meets with a favorite, and it would be the case now, though I originally did not design this surprise."

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Bernard. "Whom can you be waiting for that would be more likely to retain a man captive in the house than the ladies already present?"

"That remains my secret, but not long, I hope—at least till I can answer by deeds;

and indeed I can do so already," said the Countess, looking toward the door, and hastening to meet the young person who just then entered. "How kind!" she said to the new-comer, "to respond to my invitation by such a friendly compliance. But your notes drew me so sweetly and irresistibly that I could not forego venturing the impudent request."

"Why will you always make me feel ashamed?" answered Frances Alisette, for she it was, in the most charming silver-tones, while inclining to kiss the Countess' hand. The Countess, however, averted it, and kissed the lovely girl right heartily on her fresh and pouting lips. "You know but too well," said Frances, "how very happy it renders me when I can spend an evening with you."

The character of this young girl was made up of an affectionate tenderness and roguish playfulness; it was dubious whether she was sincere in what she said, or whether she only made sport of the Countess. But even if the latter were the case, one could not help forgiving it, as it was done with so amiable a grace that no one could think of taking offence. Led by the Countess, she now approached the company, saluted all around with a friendly mien, as if knowing them, and then seated herself between Jaromir and Bernard. She immediately commenced a lively chat, in which Bernard joined her; Jaromir seemed very much struck with his pretty neighbor, but continued his confidential chat with Lodoiska. Alisette was merry and sad by turns; she passed with astonishing rapidity from one extreme to the other, without the least affectation, design or effort being perceptible. Her features were ever the faithful mirror of her feelings, or rather her expressions, either from habit as an actress, or from natural facility. This lent her a peculiar grace, difficult to describe; her countenance in some respects was that of a child, which instantly and distinctly betrays the slightest shade of pleasure or of pain. But nothing could exceed her delight when she learned that Bernard had seen England and Scotland.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "then I have at last found somebody with whom I can talk of the land where I saw my happiest days, and my saddest too," she quickly added, sorrowfully.

"You have passed both your happiest and your saddest days there?" asked Bernard. "I can almost say the same respecting myself. But may I venture to ask what marred your happiness? for it would be rather venturesome to enquire the source whence it sprung."

"You prove yourself at once both vain and capricious," cried Alisette, with mock dis-

pleasure, puckering her brow into many formidable wrinkles. "Just like the men; for you all have the vanity to imagine that there can be no happiness without you."

"And is it not sufficiently modest," answered Bernard, entering into her playful mood, "that I at least presume that there may be other causes of unhappiness?"

"No. You must not jest about such things," said Frances, mournfully, but in so low a tone that her words reached Bernard, only. "It was there that I lost my only sister, whom I loved above everything, and who shortly before had become a widow, leaving me no other memento than her little orphan daughter, Nadine, who one day must fill her mother's place with me. Oh, sir, you cannot believe how much misery may be crowded together in one short life! You rich and great ones little know into what straits the poor, and particularly a helpless girl, may too easily be brought! But we must leave this. It is not a fit subject for discussion in company. But rather tell me how you were pleased with England."

"Not so well as with Scotland," answered Bernard; "for there I was attracted by the wonderful character of the natural scenery, and of the people. In Scotland, too, I found a thousand-fold better subjects for my pencil—for I am a painter."

"You are a painter!" exclaimed Alisette, joyfully. "Oh, that is excellent! Then you have, no doubt, brought a good many drawings with you, which you must let me see; for I have also travelled a good deal in that country."

"Very willingly," replied Bernard. "But for every leaf which I shall show you, you must sing me a song."

"A thousand, with pleasure," said Alisette, merrily, every trace of seriousness having vanished from her face. "Or do you believe that I sing with reluctance? Oh, no; my whole soul is joyful when I sing."

Bernard was about answering:

"Well, then, make yourself and others happy," when their chat was broken off by the entrance of a stranger, Colonel Regnard. He was a man of stately mien, perhaps forty years of age, but his lineaments seemed to indicate that he had enjoyed life faster than is generally wholesome. A broad scar descended his temple to the eye, but did not particularly disfigure his brow. His look yet possessed some waning fire; his features were marked, decided, indicative of mind but without animation. As for the rest, he possessed that easy, gentlemanly demeanor which a Frenchman seldom acquires but with the age and rank of a Colonel; and which the German assumes ten years earlier.

Regnard approached the hostess, and saluted her with the graceful ease of a man of the world. To the rest of the company, he made a comprehensive bow, without signaling any in particular. On Alisette, alone, he bestowed a confident look.

"I see," he began, after the lapse of a few moments, "something doubly remarkable to me; three entirely unknown gentlemen, in an equally unknown uniform. May I beg of you," turning to the Countess, "to make me acquainted with my comrades in arms."

She then introduced the new-comers.

"So Count Rasinski will arrive soon?" the Colonel remarked, on learning the connexion existing between himself and the young men. "This gives me great pleasure—for we have shared many a hot day together in Spain and Italy. An excellent soldier," he added, dividing his address between the Countess and the young men; "the Emperor could have selected none better, as the leader of a free corps. The Count has a military eye, which grasps the relation of great operations at a glance and judges with precision at what point an apparently trifling aid may be of incalculable service. The majority of leaders of such troops err in viewing their enterprises as detached, and execute them accordingly. It is very well to intercept one of the enemy's transports of provisions; to cut off a detachment, or harass and fatigue the enemy. But, on the whole, it benefits but little. The true partisan must either enact the part of the wasp, which stings the huntsman's hand, at the moment of firing; or else assume that of the mouse, which knows the net in which the lion is entangled."

The Colonel spoke on military subjects with great perspicuity and decision, yet without sinking into that disagreeable tone which seems to presuppose giving instruction to perfect tyros and imparting to them the choicest lessons of wisdom. He threw out the profoundest observations as only by chance, as things which were understood of themselves; and nothing appeared in his generally passive and immovable features which savored of an exaction of obsequious praise for the value of his dicta. So, in this instance, everything he said bore, properly speaking, only the character of a eulogy on Count Rasinski.

Jaromir responded to the Colonel's remarks approvingly, through which a conversation on military matters was set on foot; to which Louis and Bernard listened with much interest. This drew them somewhat away from the ladies, and they were consequently the more agreeably surprised, when, suddenly a few chords were heard from the opened piano. It was Francis Alisette, who,

on being summoned to sing, had, with a playful grace, seated herself at the instrument, and unconsciously made a few passages, while looking thoughtfully up, as if seeking something that would do to perform.

"Hist!" said the Colonel. "Now let us listen, my friends! Every sound of this silvery voice which passes unheard is an irrecoverable loss."

All now looked at Alisette, who, with a gentle undulation of her pretty little head, sang a French romance, which she delivered with much feeling, in all its soft, wave-like melody; now sinking, now hovering high in the dominion of sound. It was, indeed, a charming sight to behold her. For, without betraying any design—without employing any affected play of the features, the expression of her countenance accorded with that of the music, and of the words, in their most delicate turnings. The beautifully curved lineaments of her face seemed to be moved by the faintest breath of sound, as the tiny streamer of a pennon caressingly bends to the faintest breath of air.

And what an indescribable grace dwelt in those clear, silvery tones, which struck the ear so delightfully, and seemed to penetrate the heart with such touching plaints and entreaties. Every one listened with suspended breath. Bernard suffered his eye to rove all around. He would have been glad to sketch everything in the room possessed of eyes and ears; for the interest depicted in every countenance imparted to each a peculiar character for the pencil to portray. From long practice of deciphering the expression of a countenance from the hidden depths of the soul—being convinced that all forms are subject to a spiritual law, which we do not always readily understand—he was now busily employed in interpreting those beautiful hieroglyphics before him. An undertaking, by the way, in which we often become involved in more intricate mistakes, than if trying to unravel the secrets of the Egyptian catacombs from the magic writings of Eastern priests. Two facts, however, did not escape his observation.

Lodoiska seemed less employed by the song than in watching its effect on Jaromir. He, on the contrary, was so completely lost in contemplation of the singer, that he did not notice how she directed all her words and looks towards him, in quite a striking manner.

Bernard made a third discovery, before the song was concluded; namely, that the Colonel appeared to have shared his second discovery, and knitted his brow very portentously. Bernard was too well versed in the school of experience, not to draw a number of inferences from what he perceived. Some ex-

pressions which had fallen from the lips of the Countess had left it to be plainly understood that the Colonel labored assiduously to gain the favor of the pretty Alisette. If she then accorded the preference to the young and handsome Jaromir, it might lead to serious difficulties, as the Colonel did not look like a man who would patiently brook a rival. With all the apparent innocence so conspicuous in the demeanor and character of Alisette, Bernard still had his doubts whether this appearance was not deceptive. In his life-time he had enjoyed frequent opportunities to learn, by experience, to what extent women know to conceal their real characters by their outward conduct; and how difficult, therefore, it is to distinguish if an innocent look proceeds from a pure and innocent mind, or not. He had but very slight grounds of suspicion against Alisette; and what he had just noticed might as easily be the result of accident as of design, as Jaromir was standing directly opposite to her. He felt, however, as if an inward voice had spoken to him. The beautiful clear blue mirror of placid waters which reflects sunshine and sky in such delightful fulgence, conceals a dangerous gulf beneath! On the contrary, Lodoiska's noble and mild features bespoke uncontestedly the inmost disposition of her soul, and without being more than usually attracted by the graces of her person, her aspect seemed indisputably to tell him:

"This one, thou mayest trust; her eye is also her heart."

But, did not that same eye, so anxiously riveted on Jaromir, appear to speak and say:

"Thou trusty friend of my youth, I love thee faithfully in my inmost heart! Must I stand by and behold this tempting siren weave around thee the silvery chords of her music, and finally rob me of thee forever!"

As soon as Frances Alisette had finished her song, she sprang up gaily, and flew to Lodoiska, who was sitting on a corner of the sofa.

"Now, my dear Countess," she pleaded, "you must give us a song; your short Polish national airs are so very charming, however little I may understand of the words."

"Oh, no, no," said Lodoiska gently declining; "how can I let my saddening strains and unsteady voice be heard after your beautiful melodies?"

"Oh, but they are so sweet, so touching! For do you think that I have not overheard you, when sometimes late in the night you have sung these national airs by yourself in your chamber?"

Lodoiska blushed sweetly.

"Yes," continued Alisette, taking Lodoiska's

hand with a beseeching motion, "the night and open window often betray the sweetest secrets. That little song, for example," humming the beginning of the melody,—"I should love to hear you sing, I have already heard two successive nights."

Lodoiska blushed without suspecting it. Frances had placed her in an awkward position, as the words of the little song must seem, to those who understood the Polish idiom, really to betray some heart-secrets.

"The song," she said at last, "is a memorial of early childhood, having often heard it sung by my mother; it is by pure accident that I have sung it two successive evenings, as the nightingale opposite kept me awake."

"Oh, then sing it the third evening also," answered Frances, "pray, pray, do!" and she coaxed so prettily that Lodoiska must indeed have had some very weighty objection if she had returned a negative answer. She would have been glad to give such an answer, but she felt that it would be better to appear willing to sing it, than by her refusal to lend the words of the song a real import, especially as she must suppose that Jaromir and the Countess in all probability already were aware what song it was by the melody which Frances had hummed. She yielded therefore to her entreaties, suffered herself to be led to the piano, sat down to the instrument and began:—

II.

All alone I love to wander,
Seeking out the stillest glade;
From the gay I keep asunder,
Courting the deep forest-shade;
By the wall of rocky ledges,
By the streamlet's verdant edges,
I sit me down to think: Oh when
Wilt thou return to me again!

III.

On the pinions of the breezes
Lovely spring comes back again,
Bringing with her all that pleases—
Bringing happiness again.
But in the forest's dark recess,
To mourn alone's my happiness;
To sing the ditty—When, Oh when
Wilt thou return to me again!

IV.

And when the swallows' young forsake
Our hospitable quiet roof,
Oh, that I could with them betake
Myself to flight from hence aloof!
If paleness on my lip should rest,
Till thee I should have found—caress'd,
I'd never droop my wing; but when
Wilt thou return to me again!

IV.

As the brook its ripple pours,
On and on to meet the sea,
So my tears would fall in showers,
Never to be dried away.
How much longer wilt thou tarry?
Anguish makes my heart most weary.
My head in death must sink. Oh when
Wilt thou return to me again?

Lodoiska possessed a sweet, touching voice, from which out of timorousness she elicited only low notes, but which in their pure and distinct modulations resembled the trembling sounds of the æolian harp. In combination with the gentle blush on her noble countenance, and the words seeming to express the secret throbings of her heart, her song produced quite a peculiar impression. It was maidenly delicacy in some measure embodied in these strains; not merely a specimen of art, but a sweet image of nature herself, created by her in some consecrated moment, and endowed with all the touching graces of life. It is easily to be accounted for why it was that Lodoiska to-day repeated the song which she yesterday would have sung with so much freedom, with evident embarrassment. For within only a few hours the seed of a pertinent import of the words applicable to the reality of her own state had commenced to spring up; this as yet but dimly-apprehended foreboding produced a timidity and constraint which otherwise she would have been unconscious of. A man is more inclined than a maiden to look for omens in accidental incidents, when they side with his wishes; Jaromir ventured therefore to apply these words to himself, and in so doing his heart beat with tumultuous joy. He reflected, that, as mentioned by Frances, she had sung this song in the solitary and silent watches of the night. Had she then been thinking of him? Yes, yes, he said to himself, and he believed what he so ardently wished. This supposition of her affections meeting him half way, quickly fanned his passion into a flame; he enjoyed the rare happiness of not doubting, but that the beloved responded to his passion, believing that he already saw her heart unveiled. Not by any act of hers, however, for like the rose, she carried her feelings concealed in the inmost blossom, but the hand of an over-ruling Providence unfolded the tender leaflets, and disclosed the jewel they enfolded.

He was not led to this conclusion by a thoughtless, mean-spirited vanity, but his strong faith in a loving heart, the buoyant hopes of youth, which in its happy fancies so easily intermixes ardent wishes and sweet realization. But he in this case, did

not delude himself with idle fancies, even if perhaps he guessed more than had been revealed—yea, than Lodoiska was capable of revealing—her heart being yet hidden to herself beneath the cloistered veil.

By desire of the Colonel, to whom music was more of a diversion than a sentiment, a duet was proposed; but Lodoiska gave a gentle but decided refusal. Time was not allowed the Colonel, who was far from being disposed to retreat so easily, to lay a scientific siege, for the Countess summoned him to conduct her to the supper table. He gallantly offered her his arm; Jaromir offered his to Lodoiska; Louis standing near one of the elder ladies, escorted her, and Bernard took Alisette under his left arm, and the other friend of the Countess, who would otherwise have been left solitary, under his right. "I place *you* at the side where my heart beats," he said to Alisette half aloud, who answered him by a look of cheerful confidence. The folding doors of the splendidly illuminated supper room were thrown open and the party entered and sat down.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE young soldiers did not retire to their rooms till towards midnight. These rooms were three, all opening on a long corridor, the windows towards the garden. By this arrangement the three friends could be separate or together at pleasure. Each one had his own apartment, but by taking only a couple of steps could enter that of his neighbor. Jaromir bid the other two a good night; he appeared to be tired. Bernard and Louis remained yet some time together, talking over the singular position of their circumstances. This was indeed the first confidential hour which they had spent together since their departure from Dresden; for, from several motives, they had been obliged to perform the journey so rapidly, that no time had been found for a quiet chat together, which besides, the presence of Jaromir, yet a comparative stranger, had prevented.

"I wonder," said Bernard, "what prize dame Fortune will next let us catch in her net. I, as the great Count Lomond, have at least opened a door. Egad! while here in Poland, I begin to repent me that I did not saddle myself with a dukedom, for in the long string of the genuine pearls of Polish magnates, a spurious one from Scotland would soon be lost. Well, who knows what may happen!"

"I envy thee thy cheerful spirits," answered Louis, "but try how I may to look at my fate in a favorable light, I cannot succeed. I believe that I must meet it earnestly and resolutely; but there it stands before me, like a dismal barren rock, on which I cannot perceive as much available soil as would serve to rear a single poor shrub, much less a flower!"

"A hand will appear," answered Bernard, "which striking the rock, as Moses did of old, will cause a rich and refreshing fountain to burst forth. There are hours in which an invisible tripod of the Pythian prophetess is placed under me, and when the Delphic oracle speaks through my lips. I think that I am at this very moment comfortably seated on the inspiring stool, and the entire stock of a magic-lantern is passing before me, portraying foreshadowings of our coming fortunes with the most delicious *couleur de rose*. I cannot for my life see why we should not earn our epaulettes in the very first engagement, in the second, vault into the captain's saddle, and in the third carry off the major's cordon. If the Russian Emperor has no more than even two or three brave generals, I do not know why the war should not continue at least for seven years, and that gives time to mature a marshal's baton with a ducal crown on the top of it, which will be very nice to exchange for my Scottish patent of nobility. And tell me, would not Prince of Petersburg, or Duke of Archangel, or even in case I should command the right wing of the army, Prince of Astrachan, sound just as well as Prince of Pontecorvo, or of Albufera, or of Dalmatia? I think it would look passing well if I should assume the title of even Duke of Kamtschatka, or Prince of the Lena, and adopt a mammoth's bone as my armorial ensign."

"Thou makest the war rather protracted," said Louis, smiling, "but yet I say the disposition is to be envied that on so black a horizon can discern such gay imagery."

"That is the talent of the painter," cried Bernard, "and I have exercised it considerably. If I place myself before a very black and threatening thunder-cloud, I see in the piled up masses, in their bold arches and sulphurous edges, the most magnificent serial palaces and mountains. But thou seemest tired; let us ascertain then if the couches of this Juno who has taken us in matches her otherwise truly Olympian reception."

Louis shook Bernard by the hand, wished him a good night, and passed to his room. Bernard felt the stimulus of the noble tokay, of which he had not sparingly partaken, coursing too fiery through his veins to resign himself to indolent slumber. He went to

the window, opened it, and looked into the garden. A cooling night-breeze wafted through the tree-tops and lightly waved the bushes to and fro; the moon was low, near the horizon, and consequently threw the dark shadows of the building far away over the green-sward; but in places where nothing intercepted her beams, she illumined the paths and grass-plats with almost the clear light of day. Bernard remembered that Alisette had said to him at table, "Here we sit directly opposite to my windows, into which the moon shines all night with her friendly beams." He took it into his head to make the experiment to steal down into the dining-saloon, which was on the other side of the palace, from thence to watch the windows of the charming girl a little while. Resolve and execution were generally simultaneous with him; he threw his dressing-gown around him, therefore, and silently left his room. Only a single half-expiring lamp flickered at the end of the corridor. He listened intently, to ascertain that all was still. Not a sound was audible throughout the whole building. With nimble feet he approached the lamp which was suspended in the centre groin above the great stair-case, and in this manner threw its light into each of the wings. Without meeting any person, he went along the entire main-front till he reached the other wing; at the angle of the corridor was another half-extinguished lamp; yet it gave light sufficient to enable one to distinguish the several doors which led from the passage into the apartments. The third door was that of the dining-room; this had been observed by Bernard, who possessed considerable acumen and a good memory. He gently tried the door whether it was locked or not; it was unlocked; he went in, and now stood all alone in the large obscure hall, where the close-drawn white curtains looked like so many pale spectres. Though he stepped very softly, his motions caused a kind of ghost-like whispering sound through the vast space. Cautiously he approached a window, parted the curtains a little, and looked out over the way. Directly opposite, across the rather narrow street, the other side of which was lighted by the moon, was a small house, in which the windows of the second story were closed by green blinds. The shadow of the palace extended so far that the lower part of the house was fully obscured by it. Though nothing could have been distinguished in the basement or at the door of the dwelling, the objects on which the bright moonlight rested were so much the more discernible. According to description, this was Alisette's dwelling, and her windows were in the second story. Bernard's keen eye discovered a light shining

through the blinds, and a moving shadow assured him that some one there had not yet gone to rest.

All at once he heard the noise of a key cautiously turned in the lock ; the front door opposite was opened, and a tall figure, wrapped in a cloak, slipped quickly out into the street, and immediately vanished in the shadows of the palace. The figure crossed the street and crept along under the windows of the saloon, so that Bernard could not follow it with his eyes, nor discover the direction it took.

Bernard was much astonished at what he saw, when, connected with other observations and remarks, the idea was forced upon him that the unknown figure was none other than the Colonel, who had just paid a nocturnal visit to the girl. He now fixed his eagle-glance on Alisette's window, to watch whether she would yet show herself, and thus corroborate his suspicions. But everything remained quiet. A feeble light yet shone through the blinds—now and then obscured by a passing shadow, but nothing more could be seen.

Bernard persevered for about half an hour in his strict espionage at the window. But positively nothing more was to be gained, he resolved to return to his room. He turned round to go to the door, but remained stationary—transfixed by amazement—for the door opened, and a spectral figure, enveloped in a large white veil, made more distinctively apparent by the moonlight, which fell through a window in the corridor, glided into the saloon. Bernard shrank back, alarmed. However extraordinary the apparition might be, it was not the fear of ghosts which fell upon him, but rather an apprehension of being caught in his singular night-wandering. Holding his breath, he leaned against a column, glad at not having the white transparent window-curtains as a back-ground. The door closed behind the entering figure, which, with inaudible steps, pursued its way the whole length of the hall. In the deep obscurity, it appeared to the observer's eye as a passing pillar of vapor, losing itself more and more in the distance.

However keenly Bernard followed the vision with his eyes, yet he could not discover which way it took. It was lost entirely at the farther end of the hall. No door was heard to open or shut; but no one came back, and not the slightest noise was to be heard. He was at first uncertain whether the figure did not linger in the saloon. Not unnecessarily to betray himself, therefore, he remained a good while immovable. He then cautiously approached the door—gained the corridor, and though the lamps were all extin-

guished, he reached his chamber without further adventure.

He was surprised, on passing Jaromir's door to find that he was yet awake. He heard him pacing the floor up and down. With redoubled caution he passed by, to escape betraying himself at the last moment. Unperceived, he safely reached his chamber. He threw himself upon his bed; but a long time elapsed, before the multitude of conjectures awakened in his mind by these extraordinary occurrences suffered him to drop into a sleep.

CHAPTER XX.

JAROMIR was the first one awake. He sprang from his couch and called his friends; for the sober hour of active duty had arrived.

Bernard and Louis were quickly in their regimentals. They prepared to sally forth. Everything in the house was yet perfectly still. The streets even were yet silent. Their way led them through the by-street in which Alisette lived. Bernard, remembering last night's adventure, looked sharply round. The window-blinds were still closed. Jaromir, on the other hand, looked up at the windows of the palace, which were screened by white curtains.

"What does your eye seek up there?" asked Bernard, with some misgiving. "Turn them this way, for in one of these houses lives the pretty Frances Alisette, as she told me herself, yesterday."

"And there lives—" cried Jaromir eagerly, but stopped suddenly short, for one of the window-curtains, at which he was just then looking, began to roll up—the window opened, and Lodoiska leaned out of it.

She blushed scarlet on seeing the three young men. Jaromir's face became suffused with a sudden glow, and he was thrown into such perplexity, that he came very near omitting his morning salute; while Bernard and Louis had already offered theirs.

"What, Countess!" said Bernard, with great freedom. "Are you not afraid of the morning air. Those who know say it is injurious to beauty!"

"I am almost always in the garden as early as this," said Lodoiska, a little constrained.

"Then, those who know must be great errorists," interposed Bernard, with ready gallantry.

Lodoiska modestly lowered her eyes and smiled, but did not reply.

The friends made another bow towards the window, receiving a friendly acknowledgment in return. Lodoiska disappeared, and they went on their way.

One look into Jaromir's bright eye revealed to so practised an observer of human features as Bernard the whole state of his heart. That he loved, and was loved in return, was plainly to be seen. From the position of the rooms, Bernard at the same time conjectured that the ghost which he had seen in the dining-hall was none other than Lodoiska.

"Ahem!" said Bernard, giving Jaromir a roguish but searching look: "the young Countess seems to be the last one to bed, and the first out of it. If not very much deceived, I saw her last night in the shape of a ghost!"

"What didst see?" asked Jaromir, quickly; "what was it, I pray thee?"

"How! art thou afraid of ghosts?" asked Bernard, a little maliciously.

"Oh, leave joking," interrupted Jaromir, half-vexed, and half beseechingly. "Tell me what thou didst see; it concerns me a good deal."

"Long after midnight," said Bernard, in an imposing tone, "I saw the chamber-door of a certain young officer standing open, and he himself awake, though so very tired after his journey!"

"Hast thou been listening, Bernard? I pray thee tell me!" cried Jaromir again.

"Ah! what will not an evil conscience do!" was the merry answer. "Listened? No! But I saw ghosts—ladies clad in white, veiled and mystical figures."

"I am becoming quite curious," said Louis. "Ghosts, adventures? let us hear."

"Dear friends!" cried Jaromir, without waiting for Bernard's answer, but seizing the hands of both, "I will be frank with you; for I see I am already half betrayed. But swear to keep it to yourselves, if you value my happiness."

"Very willingly," answered Louis, giving him his hand.

"By Styx!" said Bernard, doing the same. "Though I think it hardly necessary, as I know, or guess at the whole. But go on!"

Jaromir began:

"Lodoiska was the play-mate of my youth; she is my nearest relative. We had passed indescribably happy days together on her father's estate, near Narew. Shall I confess to you, that while yet a mere boy, I loved the sweet girl? She was thirteen, and I seventeen. But she bloomed like the most lovely rose-bud, and was already then so good—so intelligent! oh, a thousand times more so than myself! About that time I was compelled to part from her. I entered

the army: that is now six years ago. I have, since then, roved through half the world, and lived only amid the wild tumult and bustle of war. But do you believe it, dear friends, that the image of that tender child has accompanied me everywhere; and that none of all the Spanish beauties and pretty French women whom I have met with has made any impression on my heart derogatory to her worth!

"But, during years of military campaigning much of our earlier feelings evaporates! When I thought of home, it is true, Lodoiska stood before me; but the thought recurred more rarely, and in the incessant change and crowd of objects, I gradually lost all feelings of home. He who is at home nowhere, soon gets to feel at home any and everywhere! It was not till again seeing the towers of Warsaw that the old longing was awaked within me, and Lodoiska's image again floated mild and lovely before my vision. But I could think of her only as the child of by-gone days! I said a thousand times to myself that she must now be a grown-up maiden; but my heart refused to acknowledge her as such."

"And I think your heart was right," interrupted Bernard; "for her soul is still that of a child's, and shines forth through her outward beauty as through a thin gauze. A more guileless heart never dwelt in woman's breast. I understand it—for I have sketched many an angel, but, alas! many a Jezebel, too."

"Thou speakest exactly as if taking the words out of my mouth," cried Jaromir, with joyful animation, not hearing or noticing the appendix Bernard tacked to his pleasing delineation. "This was the cause of our becoming intimate as we had been on the day we parted. When we separated for the night, therefore, I felt quite crest-fallen. Disquieting thoughts racked my mind: I did not know what I wanted. The moon shone brightly; the night-air was so mild and balmy. As I lay leaning out of my window, I saw a figure in white, moving through the dark copse, in the garden. Oh! if that were she, I thought, and I could yet say a few words to her! I hastened down, and sought through all the shady walks, but in vain. But suddenly I heard in the distance, but very low, those little couplets which she sang for us in the evening. I followed the sound, and discovered the lovely creature in a bower by the artificial fountain. At first, I intended only to listen: but I soon got vexed with myself,—went nearer—stepped suddenly before her, and spoke to her."

"Thou art indeed a bold man, my friend," again interrupted Bernard; but in gentle tones of sympathizing concern. "Thou

mightest have trifled away a great deal in that way."

"I know it, indeed ; but yesterday I could not help it ; I could not have done otherwise !" answered Jaromir, looking superlatively honest and self-complacent.

"Thou art absolved ; but go on confessing," said Bernard with consummate gravity. "I believe I should have done the very same thing. But the Countess, what did she do ?"

"She was terrified, angry, scolded, entreated—"

"I know all that," interrupted Bernard. "If one is not already sold to the evil one, when in love, then it is done afterwards. But, proceed !"

"She gave me her hand, and was so good and kind—and—"

Jaromir's young heart overflowed ; his transport beamed forth from his eyes. Speak he could not—but he fell on the neck of Bernard and Louis.

"Louis," he cried, "she consents to be mine. Sweetly reluctant she gave me the blessed promise ; but with trembling haste drove me off immediately. Perhaps at this moment she is unlocking her pure heart in prayer. Oh ! my friends, can one ever be happier ?"

Jaromir, who had completely surrendered himself to the tumult of love, did not notice that Louis was grave and deeply affected ; yea, that portentous folds gathered even on Bernard's brow. The former was thinking of Bianca. He contrasted the shadowy form of his mournful fancy with the real, living one which came decked with flowers to the meeting of the youth at his side.

"I wish you joy," said Bernard, shaking Jaromir by the hand. "You may be blessed, or at least happy and contented. Soft arms are easy fetters ; but still they are fetters. A cage is a cage, be it even as narrow as that in which John of Leyden was hung at the tower at Munster, or as dark as the Black Hole of Calcutta ; or, to put both together, as the hole into which we must all creep at last. I understand now about that spectral vision, which I found rambling about in the ancestral hall."

Jaromir pricked up his ears. Bernard then related his adventure in the saloon ; but represented himself only as a whimsical fellow, who loved to stump about at night in strange buildings, but made no mention either of the motive which had actuated him, or of the suspicions he had conceived of Alisette's conduct.

With this conversation the three friends had arrived at the end of their walk ; namely, the parade ground, where Bernard and Louis were to commence their lessons in the details of the service. They found already

on the ground several troopers and non-commissioned officers belonging to two defective squadrons of Polish lancers, which were to constitute the nucleus of the new regiment. The preliminary duty assigned to Jaromir was to form a compact whole out of these fragments. For the present he consigned his friends to the modelling hands of an old grey-beard, who was to instruct them in the first rudiments of manual service.

John Petrowski, a sergeant, who had fought under Kosciusko, became their drill-master. He entered upon his duty with a kind of awe, which did not spring, however, from respect to the exalted rank of his recruits, but from sheer professional veneration for the object itself. For here was the question of moulding two warriors who were to fight for the dear father-land ; for that beloved, sacred, father-land, to which John Petrowski in his vigorous manhood, when his old chieftain, Kosciusko called the sons of Poland to arms, so joyfully dedicated his life. He was now on the confines of old age—for the next spring he would have to count himself among sexagenarians. But still he offered his grey head, scarred by many a sabre-cut, joyfully to the service of his country ; and the old, sacred flame of patriotism and a heroic spirit glowed yet within his aged breast, as wine becomes richer and stronger through age. Two piercing eyes flashed from beneath the half-bald forehead around which circled some grey locks. The prominent aquiline nose arched towards the severe and compressed lips which were nearly concealed by high grey moustaches on which John Petrowski prided himself not a little.

His countenance seemed to say : Look at me : as mouldered and weather-beaten an oak as I seem, and though returning spring lends me no ornament to soften my rough bark, still I may, perhaps, brave the storm and the tempest with greater strength and success than yourselves. I have struck my roots deep into the stony soil, and he that pulls me down must tear away one-half of the hill along with me. He gave the word of command : "Shoulder arms ! carry arms ! ground arms ! right about face ! march ! halt !" with the solemn gravity of a priest reading mass. His disciples obeyed him with equal zeal and attention. They accordingly made rapid progress, and pupils and instructor were delighted with each other. Thus the whole day was spent by the three friends in discharging professional duties : and thus they had no leisure to see the lovely inmates of their dwelling till the evening.

Unalloyed happiness beamed from Lodoska's eyes ; the Countess welcomed Jaromir so graciously that he entertained no doubt

of her favorable disposition to promote his wishes. Bernard and Louis were aware that a few undisturbed moments must be of inestimable value to Jaromir; they accordingly paved the way for him by retiring to their rooms before he could ask it of them. Just before the supper-hour, Jaromir came himself to call them, and told them, full of joy :—

"The Countess too favors my suit, and is so motherly and kind; but she is severe too, for she has commanded me to restrain my desires until the arrival of Rasinski, as she wishes to leave the decision of the matter in his hands. Not a word, therefore, not a look, my dear friends, which can betray our love; I have promised Lodoiska to be tractable and obedient, and I will fulfil my promise like a man."

"Bravely! nobly!" cried Bernard, short and gruff as was his custom; "we will follow thy example. And if thou remainest firm, I will reward thee by painting a portrait of thy bride, or at least take a sketch of her, should there be time for no more."

CHAPTER XXI.

SEVERAL days passed thus uniformly one after the other. Alisette and Regnard were almost the only guests added to the family-circle of which Louis and Bernard were now accustomed to count themselves members. Regnard regularly brought news of the events of the war, marching of troops and similar matters, and generally introduced the world with its affairs into the quiet household, otherwise partially estranged from things beyond their own sphere. However strenuously Jaromir endeavored to control himself, his keen observation soon revealed to the Colonel his attachment to Lodoiska, and that it was reciprocated. His jealousy with respect to Alisette was therefore dissipated, and nothing now marred their social enjoyment. Alisette had been absent for two days, being busily engaged in the rehearsal of an opera, which was to be performed on the following night. The Colonel, who attended one of these rehearsals, related a number of good things about it, but had forgotten the name of the piece.

"I much regretted," he said, "that I could not stay to witness the conclusion, but I was disturbed by an unpleasant occurrence. My adjutant came and informed me that intelligence had been received that a Russian General, who has been in France on weighty diplomatic business, and had been obliged to

flee that country, is now concealed in this city, and intends to escape this very night. As my regiment happens to be on guard at the gates, I must go to post double sentries at every point."

"And who may the fugitive be?" asked the Countess, with much apparent interest.

"That we do not know," answered Regnard; "some say it is General Cz****, who certainly has been in Paris, has been engaged in a number of intrigues and suspicious connections, and by order of Napoleon was to have been arrested. But he received timely warning, and was already beyond Strasburg before the telegraph could convey the order for his apprehension. It is almost impossible that he can have lingered so long in the enemy's territories. Others pretend to know that it is Count Winzingerode, a German in the Russian service; there is something in that. But there is still another name mentioned, and the truth of the matter is that no one knows anything for certain. Mons. de Pradt has received very indefinite advices."

The Colonel was yet speaking when an orderly entered unannounced, and handed Jaromir a sealed package.

"On the very same business," he exclaimed, after having read the contents; "I am commanded to post sentinels throughout that quarter of the city where our stables are situated—particularly every passage leading to the Vistula."

"Yes, yes, they seem to push the matter in earnest," remarked the Colonel; "I shall be cheated out of Alisette's lovely song, and you out of your supper! Such is a soldier's luck."

"That is, however, easily endured," answered Jaromir, with a smile; "all that vexes me is, that I shall have to deprive our friends here of their evening's enjoyment, and perhaps their night's rest too; for I am short of suitable smart fellows, and as the service during the day is fatiguing, I must calculate on having three relieves. So, I cannot help it, my friends; you must undertake your first duty by mounting guard to-night!"

"A polite way of giving orders!" said Bernard, gaily. "Well, in God's name! If the game should double anywhere near me, it shall not escape without having a shot; I'll warrant you."

It was necessary to be expeditious; they took their leave of the ladies, therefore, buckled on their swords, threw their cloaks around them, and started.

Jaromir caused the call to be sounded, told off the sentries, designated the posts, gave the men their instructions, and the word to march off.

Bernard's post was the most distant in the

quarter. The way to it led through a lane between two high walls, one of which was the enclosure of a convent ; it was crossed by another lane running down to the Vistula. The next sentry was placed about two hundred paces from the intersecting point, but none farther down, as there was no other access to the river. Jaromir posted his sentinels himself.

"Thou art some distance away here," he said, as Bernard, drawing his sabre, assumed the attitude of a sentry on his post; "I would double my sentries if I had more men. But it is just for that reason why I put you on this post, as it requires one that will keep a sharp lookout, and it is best too, as thou speakest French, and there are so many Frenchmen about here, whom a Polander could not understand or be understood by. Farewell. In two hours thou wilt be relieved by Louis."

"You may let me stand here all night, for all I care," answered Bernard; "the night is so mild and warm, that I am glad to think that we are going to have some rain. And as to my being lonesome, never mind that; I know very well how to beguile the time, and do not need anybody to keep me awake."

"If anything should happen, fire off thy pistol ; in such a case thou wilt have immediate aid from the nearest sentry."

"Do not be uneasy about me. A good sentry needs no one to help him ; I will be answerable for myself."

Jaromir went away, and Bernard was alone. The sky became overcast with clouds ; it was near midnight and very dark, especially after the setting in of a warm, drizzling rain.

The gable-ends and turrets of the old convent opposite, the outlines of which had stood out as dark shadows against the sky, were now mingled into one indeterminate mass. Only the feeble light of a night-lamp was visible from some small windows. All was as still as the grave. The languishing call of the nightingale and the gentle murmurs of the passing stream were the only sounds to be heard.

"It is lucky that I have a pair of sharp eyes," muttered Bernard to himself ; "for here one must keep them wide open to see anything stealing past. It will be well to put out my sword as a feeler now and then, and, like playing at blind-man's buff, to throw out my arms a little around me. Ah ! there is some light ; they are hanging out a lantern up there in the convent. That will do me good service."

There was indeed a light visible in one of the upper windows, as if some one was lighting another out. The light moved briskly

to and fro a few turns, and then disappeared.

"Now it is dark enough ; it cannot be worse in the deepest pit of Bauman's cave ; the confounded light has completely blinded me. One who wanted to escape here, could not contrive a better way than to take a dark lantern, first thrust it in the face of the sentry, then throw it at his head, and run for dear life ! But stop ! what was that ? Was it lightning ? Again !"

A feeble, flickering light, proceeding from the river-side, penetrated the darkness. The narrow lane did not admit of a distinct view from whence it came ; but presently Bernard plainly saw sparks flying, and discovered that some person on the river, apparently near the shore, was striking fire.

His quick apprehension immediately connected this discovery with the appearance of the light in the convent. Were these mutual preconcerted signals ? Suddenly he heard some one stepping lightly ! It was, then, no delusion. Intently listening, with his head bent forward, he stood holding in his breath. Some one approached quickly, but with caution ; he could distinguish a whispering and muttering. They were now close upon him. Bernard held out his sword, and cried out, in Polish :

"Who goes there ?"

A moment's silence ensued ; a dark figure then approached with firm step, and answered in a deep, manly tone, a few words which were unintelligible to Bernard. They sounded, however, like some pious benediction.

"I do not speak Polish," he said, in that very language, at the same time making a motion with his sabre, intimating that he would suffer no one to pass.

"French, then ?" replied a female voice of uncommon sweetness.

"Yes, but German better," answered Bernard, in French.

"A German soldier !" exclaimed the same voice, inadvertently, for a glad surprise was implied in the manner of utterance.

"Yes, a German," answered Bernard ; "and, as you understand that language, I will tell you in plain German that no one passes this way without a pass from the officer on guard."

"My God !" replied the female, in trembling accents, "we are in great haste. This godly man goes to offer a dying person the last consolations of earth ; he lies there yonder by the river ; for that purpose we have brought him out of the convent. You would not prevent such a pious deed, would you ?"

Bernard now first discovered that the stranger was enveloped in a monk's habit, and that another female figure was standing

behind him. Nothing more could be distinctly seen in the obscurity.

"I dare not deviate from my orders. But, if it is as you say, go along that lane between the walls; at two hundred paces distance you will find the next sentinel; inquire of him for the lieutenant of the guard. He is in the guard-house close by, and will undoubtedly suffer you to pass."

"The next sentry is two hundred paces from here?" said the man in the monk's cowl, no longer in a sententious tone.

"Two hundred."

"That is pretty far."

"I cannot help that," answered Bernard.

The stranger seemed irresolute; a deep silence followed. At that moment the same clear light was seen in the direction of the river, but this time quite near, and the plashing of an oar was distinctly heard. Bernard was surprised, and turned toward the water. The suspicion flashed upon his mind that this incident was connected with the persons before him; but the thought had hardly nurtured before he felt himself rudely seized by the neck, and saw a poignard flashing against his breast. The blow took effect, but was turned aslant by the broad shoulder-belt of buff-leather from which his sabre was suspended, and only made a scratch on the skin. He tore himself away by a vigorous movement, seized hold of the hand in which was clutched the dagger, and aimed a blow of his sabre at the head of his unknown enemy. The party drew hastily back, avoiding the blow, but slipped, and fell to the ground. Bernard instantly pulled out his pistol, held it to the breast of his fallen foe, and cried:

"Stir, and you are a dead man!"

But on the instant the female threw herself at his feet, raised her arms beseechingly towards him, and cried, in accents of the greatest terror:

"Have mercy! mercy! do not kill him!"

Bernard felt a strange thrill; that voice went to his inmost heart. He was on the point of calling aloud for help, but the appearance of the suppliant who encircled his knees convinced him that he had no danger to apprehend in that quarter.

"I will take no revenge," he said, resolutely, "but my duty imposes severity upon me. You are my prisoner!"

"Send a bullet through my breast, young man," said the prostrate man; "for it would be more abhorrent to me to be your prisoner than to die!"

"Oh! my father!" now cried the young girl, as if beside herself, seizing his hand. "No! no!—not so. He will have pity! I will entreat for you!"

She arose and turned to Bernard.

"Oh, sir, your words betray you as a gen-

tlemen! Your heart will understand a daughter's grief. We are lost, unless you permit us to go. Oh, be magnanimous—let us escape! I would offer you gold, but dare not insult a man from whom I beg a noble deed as a boon."

Bernard remained standing in conflict with himself.

"I may not do it. Cease! Every word you utter only binds me more to my duty. I believe—I know whom I have before me!"

The stranger had arisen from the ground.

"You are a German," he said. "Whatever cause may have brought you hither, your first duty is towards your father-land. I swear to you that you do not violate that duty by letting me go!"

"No, by the eternal heavens, that you do not!" cried the female, lifting up her hands in testimony of her oath. "My entreaties do not lead you to the commission of any crime. Never, never will your heart reproach you for the deed."

The clatter of arms was heard at a distance. Some one appeared to be coming. Bernard listened in great anxiety.

"Great God!" cried the suppliant, "if you wait one minute longer it will be too late; listen to the prayer of the sorely afflicted!"

Bernard still remained standing, torn by a violent struggle. Was he to betray the first honorable trust which his profession imposed upon him? Was he not about plunging the friend into ruin who had assisted in his own deliverance? And still his own fate, but more than all, the indescribable power which the pressing entreaties of the petitioner exercised over his heart, prevailed.

"Flee, then," he said, hastily, letting his armed hand fall to his side; "but I dare, I will not see which way you take! Away! away!"

"Thanks, thanks!" whispered the beautiful figure, her voice broken by tears and joy together, as she seized his hand and endeavored to press her weeping countenance against it.

On feeling the warm pressure of that face, a thrill of delight coursed through Bernard's frame. Meeting and separation to be crowded thus into one and the same moment! Was he to suffer this miraculous affair to pass without leaving a trace behind? Bernard wished at least some token; so he quickly drew off a glove from the fair creature's hand; but while his hand passed over her slender and trembling fingers, he came in contact with a ring. He endeavored to draw it from her finger. She resisted for a moment.

"This ring?" she said; "this very one?" To which Bernard replied:

"Yes, this very one must I have; do not speak loud—exactly this one, or none!"

But he had already torn it from her finger, at the same time impetuously pushing his own ring in the place of it.

"Well, then, take it," she said, as she passed rapidly away from him; "but I must have it back when the war no longer tears asunder every kindlier tie among fellow-creatures. Farewell, and may the Almighty ever bless my preserver!"

A few moments more, and Bernard heard a boat loosening from the shore, and then vigorous strokes of oars driving it through the waves. He breathed freer.

"They are safe now, and it is high time, for the relief guard is coming."

He could still hear the sound of the oars as the guard came up, and the usual military ceremony commenced.

"Nothing new on your post?" asked the non-commissioned officer, who happened to be old Petrowski.

"Nothing," answered Bernard.

"Relieved!"

Louis now took his friend's place; as for Bernard, his tour of duty was over for the night. He hastened home; on his way he fortified himself in the resolution closely to lock up the whole occurrence in his own breast, and not to communicate a syllable about it even to Jaromir or to Louis, so that at the worst, the fault would remain all his own.

He reached his room. With all haste he procured a light in order closer to examine the ring.

"Confusion!" he cried out, as he held it to the candle; "confusion! is it a trick of Satan, or am I out of my senses!"

The ring in his hand was his own!

"Oh, what a fool!" he cried, madly striking his brow with his doubled fist; "these clumsy, silly fingers of mine have changed the rings! I might almost beat my own numskull into a mummy, and cry, with Franz Moor:—"Stupid! stupid!"

He walked furiously up and down.

"Ha! ha! ha! Now indeed I must tell the story to all the world, for it is too exquisite! And did she notice the mistake? What a witless fool must not the preserver appear to her! Bernard! Bernard! it was a masterly stroke! Like the apprentice to the astrologer, thou standest before the locked portals, but hast forgotten the key which is to open them to thee!"

He became melancholy; tears started into his eyes. He sat himself down, and leaned his head upon his hand.

"Yes, yes, I know it," he said, still talking

to himself; "I knew all that long ago; I have often experienced it. It is my fate which always pays me off in my own coin. I ought to learn to know these tricks sometime! Not that I care about finding her again; for, at best, it is pretty sure that I never shall. What in a dark night appears so bewitching, is very likely nothing above common by day—all trash and bother!"

Half-dejected, half-exasperated, Bernard threw himself on his bed; but it was long, very long, ere sleep closed his eye-lids.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE opera of which Regnard had spoken was to be performed on that evening. Louis was unable to ascertain who was the author of the piece or the composer of the music, either from its name or from the *dramatis personæ* mentioned in the placards. He felt great curiosity, therefore, to hear the music, particularly as Frances had told the Countess that it was very charming, and that she never had had a part assigned her with which she was so much pleased. At seven o'clock they all drove to the theatre; the Countess, Lodoiska, Regnard, and our three young friends were altogether in the same box. Bernard's eye roved with delight over the array of beautiful women which adorned the first tier.

"Really," he said, jogging Louis on the elbow, "I never saw a theatre with such a beautiful garland of flowers before. At Drury-lane and Vauxhall I found the boxes filled prettily enough; the English women are irresistible in their noble look, the elegance of their attire, the soft, virgin expression of their blue eyes; but, by St. Luke! the patron Saint of all limners, I vow to thee they are, after all, nothing but false stones when compared with the diamonds we find flashing their fires here."

"But Lodoiska is still by far the handsomest of them all," said Louis in a whisper, "though I must agree with thee, that I never have seen so rich a circle of beautiful females."

"She is not the handsomest, that you may believe on the word of a professed connoisseur like myself," replied Bernard; "but she is the most attractive, the sweetest, the loveliest of them all. If all the beautiful busts which are leaning over the front of the boxes were changed into marble, many a nobler form would be seen; yea, I do not vouch but that Lodoiska would be eclipsed by the Countess. But it would be a very different affair, if we had all these individ

* In Schiller's play of "The Robbers."—Transl.

uals faithfully transferred on the canvass, where the magic effect of colors and looks throws the tints of the rainbow over the pure surface of the countenance. Then, I concede to you that Lodoiska would be the primrose, the slender delicate lily, the modest violet—in short every thing that is lovely, and the most beautiful flower of the whole well-stocked parterre."

The conversation was cut short by the striking up of the music in the overture. By the very first staves, Louis recognised that the piece which they were about to hear was no other than the well-known "Swiss Family." He smiled a little to himself at the great enthusiasm with which the Colonel had spoken of the work; but he was well aware that Alisette, who would make a very pretty appearance in the character of Eme-line, in the advertisements had been re-baptised with the pastoral name of Dorinna. And the reality fully justified his conjecture. The introductory scenes passed by without producing any decided impression. But the very first appearance of Alisette riveted the attention in the highest degree. She had grasped the character she represented with a perfect identity; that is, she had transplanted the fixed forms and colors peculiar to the nationality of the Swiss, into a region of her own, half-ideal, and yet not divested of its striking characteristics. In the costume she had preserved some traces of that of the Swiss, but here and there with arbitrary alterations of her own. She wore her hair in flowing curls, lightly festooned by a few ribbons, one of which, of a dark color, bordered the white open brow. Neck, bosom, and shoulders were not so much covered as in the real national costume, though she retained the becoming black boddice. The dress, on the contrary, was more deep and modest than usual, reaching down to the ankles, and it was not so puckered, but permitted the form to be seen to very great advantage. With consummate skill and coquetry she had encased her neat little feet in sober-looking stockings with flowered clocks, and tight-fitting satin shoes, always taking care to exhibit them in the most attractive manner, so that whether walking or stationary, she made the most graceful appearance. When the first notes of her sweet voice were heard, Louis was astonished to observe her delicate organ was capable of filling the entire house. In every part the voice was distinctly audible from its faintest breathing to the fullest and most powerful swell. No defect was perceptible in the tide of warbling sounds, but the enchanting songstress always found the appropriate key and volume for the tenderest as well as the most powerful expression of the

passions. And as she moreover transfused with inimitable grace the spirit of the music into the minutest motion of her frame, even to the slightest play of mien or look, the lovely image which she presented must necessarily enrapture and fascinate every heart. Lodoiska was dissolved in tears, even during the first act. At the words: "Who ever heard me complain!" the agitated girl instinctively drew her hand to her heart as if to seek some relief from its tremulousness. She was in reality so carried away by her sympathies that she actually experienced the pain which Alisette counterfeited so well. Or was it a prophetic voice which spoke, as yet but darkly and confusedly within her heart? Was it a mysterious premonition, called into existence through the proximity of her who threatened to exercise a baneful influence on the destiny of her life? Did she already behold the venomous head of the viper concealed beneath the fragrant roses?

Jaromir, whose fresh and lively imagination became readily enchain'd by any passing impression, was now all eye and ear. Alisette led his heart where she listed, like another Armida. Bernard indeed imagined that she very frequently directed her looks to the handsome youth, but she seemed also to exercise absolute sway over every heart.

At the end of the first act Regnard left the box; Bernard, who followed him with argus-eyes, saw him directing his steps to the stage. It became more and more evident to him that some sort of connection, and that a very intimate one, existed between Alisette and the Colonel, but he was almost certain that the heart of the girl had but a very small share in the matter.

Jaromir turning to Lodoiska, asked her:—
"Is it not beautiful?"

"Yes! but also painful," she answered, heaving a sigh.

Louis, the only person who was acquainted with the piece, and who possessed discrimination enough not to confound the merits of the performance with those of the work itself, expressed his opinion to the Countess with more of sound judgment than of admiration. She listened to him with much pleasure, as indeed she generally did on any subject, being much impressed by his serious and intelligent views. Lodoiska also was quite willing to be disenchanted from her oppressive excitement. Jaromir alone seemed opposed to allow any defect or blemish to attach to that which had seized on his untutored heart. He had until now been so far removed from every thing appertaining to refinement, that the first suggestions of a more beautiful world would naturally appear somewhat enchanting.

The second act commenced, and in this the

tyro already made the discovery that he by no means had arrived at the *ultima thule* of wonders, for the interest increased amazingly. But the finale of the piece threatened fully to overwhelm the young loving hearts in the exuberance of their excited feelings. Alisette was really so beautiful, so pathetic, that the art even in the eyes of the sober-minded Louis, became exalted to the highest regions of purity.

The Countess and Lodoiska, accompanied by Regnard, drove home, while the three young men returned on foot, and consequently arrived somewhat later. As they were ascending the great flight of stairs, they were met by the Countess, her face radiant with smiles.

"Not into the dining-hall," she said; "follow me first into the parlor, for the table is not yet quite arranged."

The friends unhesitatingly followed the injunctions of the hostess. No one but the Colonel was in the room.

"Lodoiska," the Countess said, "is changing her dress, and we shall have to wait yet a little while, as the lovely Alisette has promised to sup with us."

The friends sat quietly conversing, having their backs toward the door, when Jaromir suddenly felt two hands covering his eyes from behind, leaving him to guess who the unknown might be; but time was not given him, for Bernard and Louis were already on their legs, uttering in joyful exclamation, "Count Rasinski!" while it was Boleslaus who had covered Jaromir's eyes. He embraced his friend and comrade with stormy affection, and then greeted Rasinski with equal impetuosity.

"How have you been? What have you been doing?" were questions that passed back and forth without any one waiting for answer.

"A thousand cordial greetings from your friends," were the first words which Rasinski addressed to Louis, as soon as the first ebullitions had subsided; "My departure was so sudden, that there was no time to send long letters by me, but still I have a few lines, and with the next mail you will have more."

The news from his friends, this first connecting link with a happier past, naturally awakened melancholy feelings in Louis. But this melancholy was blended with a gentle satisfaction that there still existed for him loved beings, who watched his dark path of life, and whose wishes and prayers surrounded him like guardian angels. From his heart he thanked the bearer of such welcome memorials, and begged to be put in possession of what was designed for him.

Bernard, ever circumspect, took the first

opportunity to call Count Rasinski aside and acquaint him with their change of names.

"Excellent! my young friend," said Rasinski; "you will make a good partisan, for you keep your eyes and ears open to some purpose. That is a good omen, I think; Count Lomond, you may put in your claim for promotion: and I commend you besides, for tacking the title of Count to your name. For, however rudely the times may shake old things and new in the dice-box, lead will ever sink to the bottom, and oil float on the surface. Rank and wealth will therefore only be things of worth when the Russian Empire shall have become an Athenian Republic, and Madrid or Naples transformed into a second Sparta. Something may be made of you, my friend; and Louis may be willing or not, but he must attach a Count or Baron to the name of Soren, if only as a convenient handle in addressing him."

They then returned to the sitting room together.

"Well, that is a fact," said the Countess, as they entered; "your professional duties seem very pressing, as you begin to attend to them on the first moment of your arrival."

"Thou knowest, sister," answered Rasinski, "that the soldier is no more than a wheel in the machine, which must turn according to general laws if you will avoid its stopping, or save the refractory part from being crushed to atoms. But everything, I trust, is now settled for to-day, and we are entirely at your service, my lady-sister."

He then sat down by her side, and caressingly took her hand in his. She looked at him with affectionate concern, as if about to examine whether he were indeed the beloved brother of old.

"I do not know," she said, after a few moments' scrutiny; "but thou seemest to me somewhat altered, Stephen. I observe a furrow here on thy brow, which looks much like those iron grief ploughs up from the soul. Indeed, brother, thy brow is no longer that clear open front which inspired strength while looked upon."

"Age, my dear Jeannot, exacts its claims upon me," he answered, smiling. But the deep seriousness of his aspect was not to be disguised beneath so flimsy a veil.

"It is not the furrow of age; it is one of sorrow or care. Make thy sister the participant of one-half of thy troubles; otherwise her burden will be doubled, and thou unable to prevent it; for as thou knowest right well, uncertainty magnifies danger."

This conversation between brother and sister was carried on unnoticed by the rest of the company. The Countess reiterated her request for confidence from her brother, which he answered only by grave silence, looking

thoughtfully before him and slowly shaking his head.

"Our country," he answered, at last, "demands all the energies of our being, and many other sacrifices besides. We offer them cheerfully; but no one ought to take umbrage if we cannot be altogether insensible to the pain which the loss or voluntary renunciation of many blessings must entail."

The sister looked at him with pity, and gave him her hand. He pressed it in silence, and fastened a grateful loving look upon her true and faithful features.

The attention of the party was now attracted by a new object. Alisette entered the parlor. She floated across the threshold of the apartment like a May-queen; for she carried a rich bouquet in her hand, having placed one of the roses in her own bosom. Making a friendly courtesy, she quickly passed by the gentlemen, and with light and buoyant steps tripped up to the Countess, who, being last, in pensive broodings had not perceived her approach. Neither did Rasinski become conscious of her presence till she stood right before him, when he sprang up with some little embarrassment, to salute her as a stranger.

"Here I am!" she exclaimed, in her silver tones, making a graceful courtesy. "But may a poor Swiss maiden dare to appear in this illustrious circle?"

"Welcome, welcome!" answered the lady of the house; "and what an exuberance of gifts does my sweet siren bring!" she cried, on seeing the nosegay of fragrant roses. "I cannot show a single bud in my garden yet; but in your hands is the whole in full blow at once."

"It is a piece of gallantry for which I do not know whom I have to thank," Alisette replied. "I was yet in my dressing-room, busy changing my costume, when some one knocked. My maid, Constance, opened the door a very trifle and asked who it was. Instead of an answer an unknown hand put this rare bouquet into her hands. It is cruel, is it not, to consign so many beautiful flowers to so early a death? My unknown and munificent friend must have plundered all the rose-bushes in Warsaw; for they are yet scarce, and of the wild ones certainly not one is yet in flower."

"How highly favored are these, then, to have such a sweet destination!" said Rasinski, gallantly.

Frances now first looked at him, and was surprised at seeing a stranger.

"My brother," said the Countess, introducing him, at the same time making him acquainted with her by expatiating on the exquisite treat which the art of the pretty cantatrice had afforded that evening. She seemed to be very happy in receiving this homage

to her talents; but declined all praise, by modest deprecating words. She then playfully took the roses, and said:

"I must be grateful for so much kindness. So many eulogies, so many roses! here! here!" saying which, with playful assiduity she distributed to each one a rose. But Regnard received none.

"You did not applaud me, and therefore I give you no flower. But to you I will give two instead," she said, turning to Jaromin, giving him the two most beautiful ones of the whole collection. Without tarrying to receive his astonished acknowledgment, she turned with empty hands back to the Countess, who received her with a playful threat of the uplifted finger, saying:

"Thou prodigal daughter! Is that the way you dispose of the gifts of your admirer? If he only were here!" casting a glance at Regnard.

"Would that he were. He would then see that his present has afforded me the highest of pleasure: a thousand times greater than if I had seen it wither sadly away, in a vase on my toilet."

Lodoiska, silent as a shadow, had entered the apartment, and stood unexpectedly at the Countess' side.

"Ah! there you are at last!" cried Alisette, approaching with a salute. "How is this, and you have no rose, and yet have applauded me prettiest of all? Or do you suppose that I did not see your tears? When my singing moved you to tears or to smiles, I was assured that it indeed reached the heart. And that I should not be able to give you one single rose, as a token of my thanks! But here is one yet," she cried, joyfully looking down upon the one at her bosom. She took it and tried to fix it on Lodoiska's breast. But the latter resisted, respectfully but decidedly declining the honor.

This little contest between the two beautiful girls presented indeed a charming picture. Alisette, in her white robe-like attire, an image of spring—the youthful Hebe.—Lodoiska, in a dark silk dress, serious and yet amiable. The cheeks and lips of Alisette glowing with the brightest vermillion—joy flashing from her azure eyes—her slightly-curled, bright chestnut hair flowing in waving ringlets round her neck and shoulders. The other, like the lily, a rosy tint on her cheek; the eye large, earnest, mild. Her marble brow, and noble, snow-white neck, shrouded by the rich tresses of her jet-black hair; feminine, yet dignified in her carriage; loving, yet timid in her movements. Alisette, ever in fascinating activity and motion; the other floating gently along, confiding and calm.

She finally succeeded in fastening the rose

in the golden zone by which Lodoiska's robe was confined ; and the delicate flower was beautifully set off against the dark-grey ground of the dress.

"Now I am satisfied—now I am happy!" exclaimed Frances, as she gained the victory. "Now the rose first appears to me really beautiful. I do not at all deserve it."

Bernard observed the speaker as she uttered these words, and saw an expression of sadness in the otherwise animated features of the girl. It appeared to him as if she felt some remorse in reflecting that her last words contained a bitter truth with regard to herself.

He thought to himself: is she really a beautiful Magdalen, for whom the time of penitence has not yet arrived? At the same time determining to pursue his watchful observations. When, therefore, the folding-doors of the supper-room were thrown open he stepped up to her and again offered his arm as he had done three days before. She accepted it with a friendly look, saying :

"You have not kept your word; you have not in many particulars. You was to give me a sketch for every one of my songs; you promised to let me see your sketch-book, and you even were to take my likeness! But all this you have forgotten. You have not even called to see me, though we are such near neighbors. Well, it is something at any rate, that you remember me now, and wish to sit by me at table."

Bernard answered these sportive recriminations by making renewed promises; the company sat down to table, and he took his place by his lovely neighbor with alacrity and pleasure.

CHAPTER XXIII.

To the days of pleasure and social intercourse now succeeded those of grave, stern professional obligation. Rasinski had been commanded to hasten the completion of his corps; fatiguing duties were consequently allotted to all concerned; drills on horseback and on foot were multiplied; guards had to be mounted and relieved; field exercise had to be practised; in short, neither officers nor men found any time to devote to the recreations of society. The Emperor was expected every day, and Rasinski was ambitious of presenting him a corps in some degree organised and disciplined. The manifold gentle and pleasing ties and associations hitherto existing, were therefore severed by the rude hand of necessity. With regard to

the ardent wishes of Jaromir, Rasinski had granted his preliminary promise, and had thus rendered the lovers inexpressibly happy; still he held it indispensably necessary to write to an uncle of Lodoiska's and obtain his consent to the match. Until then the lovers were still compelled to guard their secret, and to observe that distant behavior to each other which etiquette enjoined. Bernard and Louis were almost incessantly on duty; the latter with difficulty snatched a quarter of an hour's leisure to write to his mother and sister. Of course Bernard had no time to think of pursuing his observations with regard to Alisette, or to take the promised likeness of Lodoiska.

One evening Rasinski came home in unusual excitement, and entered the saloon, where Jaromir, the Countess, and Lodoiska were sitting, saying :

"Our destiny is decided. The Emperor left Dresden the 29th of May, will stop a few days at Posen, and then probably, proceed to Thorn without coming to Warsaw. We have received orders to march on the day after to-morrow, and to take the road toward Kowno. One day more, therefore, is our own; we will spend it here in the social circle. To-day I may yet be a brother and a friend; to-morrow I can be only a soldier."

His eye shone brightly as he uttered these words, heightening the dignity and mild earnestness of his features. But on the ladies this intelligence had a saddening effect, while the men, who began to weary of a state of suspense, were filled with joy. Lodoiska turned pale and trembled like a frightened deer; the countenance of Rasinski's sister betrayed, to say the least, a mournful anxiety.

"So soon?" she said, rising to meet her brother.

"The war," continued Rasinski, "seems now to be irrevocably declared. All the negotiations of Narbonne are overthrown. It is said that it is the destiny of our country which constitutes the particular bone of contention between the two Sovereigns. Napoleon wishes us to be acknowledged as a free and independent nation; but Russia is not accustomed to relinquish the prey which she has once grasped with her bloody talons. She shows her rapacious teeth. It remains to be seen whether the Hercules, before whose uplifted club all Europe trembles, shall carry away the victory in this fearful struggle with the monster."

A noble blush of anger colored Rasinski's cheeks while thus speaking. His sister, standing before him with sorrowful looks, smoothed the hair from his brow and laying her hand on his arm, said :

"Thou wast used to cherish a bolder and

more joyous confidence formerly, though fewer were the stars of hope which glimmered above the horizon. Take courage, Stephen ! If we cannot repose on thy manly strength, what is there to sustain and keep us women ?"

Rasinski smiled.

" There are now and then moments, sister, when every thing looks dark to me ; but they do not last long, and when there is need of fortitude and decision, these do not fail me. But let it pass ; to-day and to-morrow I belong to you—to the quiet retirement of the family circle, and I shall feel all the better for it. I will restrain myself from transcending that sacred boundary which the evil genii of our existence for ever tempt us to leap. For if I step beyond this magic circle, the open ocean is ready to receive me, and my defenceless bark would be at the mercy of the hurricane. Moreover, we have domestic arrangements to attend to," he said, directing his look to Lodoiska ; " we will not forget thy sweet foster-child."

Lodoiska cast her pretty eyes to the ground, while a gentle blush rose on her cheek.

" Yes, my children," continued Rasinski, stepping between Jaromir and Lodoiska, " have you considered well what you are about to do ? Who would not be happy in contemplating your loves ? You are worthy of each other ; Jaromir is noble-minded and brave, and will know how to appreciate and guard a heart such as yours, Lodoiska. But are these times in which to form ties of love ? Can we hope for a harvest from seed sown in a whirlwind ? Who embarks when the sea rages and foams ? Who would keep a festival in a house tottering on the brink of a precipice ? Have you a measure by which to estimate the fulfilment of your hopes ? You cast yourselves into the swelling surge without knowing whether the next wave will separate you or throw you upon a happier shore !"

Lodoiska looked gently up to Rasinski and said :

" But are not times of danger and sorrow the very ones which are better endured when shared with a companion ?"

" But a man ought not to identify the fate of another with his own as long as it is more vacillating than the rolling billow."

" Truly," cried Jaromir animatedly, " I dare not sue for thy hand, for every thing hangs on the cast of a die ; and yet I would fain forge some link of hope !"

In pronouncing these last words, he looked so piteously innocent and beseeching, that Rasinski could not help giving a compassionate smile. Taking them both by the hand he answered :

" If you have truly and seriously weighed

this matter ; if it is not a mere effervescence of the passing moment which actuates you ; if thou, Jaromir, canst so far master thy youthful volatile disposition as to endure the ordeal of long dismal years of trial, then indeed you may have the right to enter into a bond of betrothal, and no danger threatening from without should keep you back. For I, too, have learned to respect that laudable feeling, which in the more serious moments of existence unites two loving hearts, in view more of the cares and troubles than of the joys which are in store for them. Thy uncle, Lodoiska, has invested me with the power of a parent, to betroth thee to Jaromir. If thou dost not shrink from venturing the first step on the territory of duty, I may join your hands, and you may exchange the rings emblematical of your promises."

The gentle being stood trembling in sweet confusion before her earnest fatherly protector, a deep crimson covering her face. He gently raised her drooping head as he repeated : " Wilt thou ?" Instead of answering she sank silently on the bosom of the Countess who had stepped to her side, still suffering her right hand to remain in that of Rasinski, who placed it into Jaromir's.

" Oh, how unspeakably happy thou hast made me !" he exclaimed, pressing the hand of the trembling maiden to his glowing lips.

" She is now thy bride," said Rasinski, " and every sacred obligation binds thee to her. Wilt thou have the courage to fulfil these obligations ?"

" Unto the death !" cried Jaromir, vehemently drawing to his bosom the charming creature who had devoted herself to him with all the trustfulness of the female heart.

Boleslaus entered at this juncture ; he became pale as a corpse on seeing the embrace of the happy ones ; for in his heart he had conceived a profound earnest love for the beautiful Lodoiska, without suspecting that she was the betrothed bride of his friend. But he conquered his pain at once with an equanimity and fortitude of which his severe yet impassioned character alone was capable, and exhibited a calm and serene countenance while the death-blow pierced his vitals. He approached the group before him with a firm step.

" I, too, may now wish you joy and happiness ?" he said, turning to Jaromir.

" No," cried the other enthusiastically, " for I am already in possession of the greatest blessing which earth can offer !"

The friends embraced cordially ; Boleslaus made a solemn bow to Lodoiska, took her hand, and said :

" May you be happy, uninterruptedly happy !" but he trembled and turned pale ; it was too much even for his youthful heroism.

"Do you know, Colonel Rasinski, that we are to march the day after to-morrow?" he said, addressing the latter, in order to turn the conversation into a new channel.

"Certainly!" answered Rasinski.

"Also that Colonel Regnard marches with his regiment, the dragoons, and the three companies of flying artillery?"

"I am acquainted with the orders only in as far as they concern myself," answered Rasinski; "I must say, however, that I am not over-well pleased with this large addition to our force, because the more there are of us, the worse quarters we shall have. I love my country, but with regard to her hospitable towns and villages, they are better prepared to starve out the enemy than to feed a friendly army."

Bernard and Louis now also entered, thus completing the family-circle. The betrothed pair were presented to them also, and received from them the sincerest congratulations and wishes of happiness.

Rasinski in the course of the evening displayed a quiet joyousness and contentment, which rendered him uncommonly amiable.

"What a pity," he said, in the course of conversation, "that our friend Bernard has so much to do with swords and lances! There has been no time allowed him to handle his brush and pencil; otherwise he must have drawn me a likeness of our sweet bride."

Jaromir exclaimed :

"And he has even promised me to do it; he wanted to paint her full-length portrait."

"Well, if I have not had time to make a picture, why can I not at least try to take a sketch?" interposed Bernard. "The evening is our own; even a hasty sketch is better than nothing; and a few hours furnish plenty of time for that. It is a noble privilege of our art that in such cases only a part of our faculties are put in requisition, and may disturb us as little as others in our social intercourse; at any rate we exact but some very trifling sacrifice—hand and eye are at work, but the ear is at liberty to follow the train of conversation, and the mind easily accommodates itself to these several occupations. Permit me, therefore, to fix my little extempore atelier in this room—to place the candles as I may require to have them, and grant as a license for my eyes the otherwise not very well-mannered indulgence, to fix them steadfastly on the object of my industry; and I hope that I shall be able to bring something to pass which will be thought worthy to serve as a small indemnity for the larger performance, for which there is indeed now no time. You may continue your talk and other pursuits perfectly unrestrained; a likeness stolen in an unsuspected moment possesses often more truth and animation than

when the object solemnly and methodically prepares to be transferred to the canvass."

All present joyfully acceded to Bernard's proposal, and he was installed in plenary form to make every arrangement to suit himself. He insisted only on the observance of one condition, viz.: that no one should look at his performance prematurely, as no artist loves to have his operations watched during the progress of his task.

He then brought in his drawing apparatus, placed the lights in order, changed a little his position with regard to the others, and set vigorously to work.

The conversation proceeded uninterrupted between the others; Bernard even took some share in it, though on the whole he listened more than he spoke, only throwing in a word here and there, to join in this or that assertion, fortifying it by some remark of his own, or to launch a pointed shaft of remonstrance or dissent.

The conversation turned only on common topics, such as called forth a certain lively interest, but did not originate any passionate excitement of the mind. Bernard had made this an object of request at the outset, because it would become impracticable for him to proceed in the "even tenor of his way" if any violent emotions should find room to interfere; he knew with consummate skill how to preserve the conversation in this calm and even tenor, and to impose a check at the right time, or to give the spur, according as the conversation lagged or threatened to flow on too rapidly.

"I have done!" he cried, when about two hours had passed, springing up from his chair with the paper in his hand.

Full of curiosity, they all crowded around him to look. He stepped back a few paces, and held up the paper mischievously, with the blank side towards the company.

"No staring, no profane gazing, I beg," he cried; "your expectations are too high; it is a half-spoiled joke, nothing more. Had I time to do it over to-morrow, I would burn this sheet before anybody had seen it. This I swear by my artistical honor, which I am just about to expose to the pillory."

He now turned the paper about; two sketches were visible upon it. The first represented Lodoiska, the second Jaromir; both exhibiting the busts only, slightly sketched, but executed with great spirit and most speaking resemblance. Every one admired the successful effort and the cleverness of the performance; Jaromir in particular, who cried out in raptures:

"What a glorious gift! what a welcome surprise! How shall I ever thank you enough for this pleasure! I can now take

with me the likeness of my beloved and leave mine with her."

Louis was the only one who contemplated the drawings with fixed attention. In a few minutes he said, laughingly :

" I could not think at first why thou didst make those gothic frames around the heads ; but knowing thee pretty well, I believed that there must be some good reason for it, and I think that I have found it out. The idea is very good, and I think still better carried out in the execution."

" Yes, yes, thou knowest my tricks," answered Bernard, " and that I rarely go a hundred steps together in a straight line. It has become as a second nature to me, to make some caper or other out of the plain road, for ever since I was born, a grinning baboon has stuck to my shoulders, and is not to be civilized or frightened away."

On hearing this speech, the rest became exceedingly curious to know what the secret was. As soon as they looked attentively, it was quickly discovered. Bernard had sketched around each of the portraits a square and apparently old fashioned frame ; in each corner of this frame appeared a face, which was a most striking likeness of some one of the persons present. At the two upper corners were Rasinski and his sister, and Louis and Boleslaus below, taken off to the life. Besides this he had ornamented each frame with a flourish at the top, in which he had introduced his own satyr's phiz looking down with a mocking expression on his own work underneath.

This humorous, but very agreeable addition to the gift was acknowledged with enthusiastic approval. Bernard received praise from every quarter, and particularly from Jaromir, who expressed his joy with affectionate eagerness.

" Such a sketch," he said, " makes me really happy ; yes, it gives me more pleasure than the most finished picture ; for this I can always carry with me, and solace myself with looking at it. However faithfully her image will ever accompany me, it is still something very different when one can thus look at it with his bodily eyes."

" Just as true," answered Bernard, " as it is something quite different when one sees the beloved herself before one's eyes. Is it not so ?"

Lodoiska lowered her eyes a little as Bernard looked at her, but she raised them immediately, and looked at Jaromir with inexpressible tenderness, as if in confirmation of what Bernard had said.

Much cause as every individual in the circle might have for seriousness, this little incident had diffused so pleasant and joyous a radiance over the sombre colorings of their

minds, that if not merry, they were at least serene and attuned to receive gentle and pleasing impressions.

CHAPTER XXIV.

At early dawn the rolling of drums and clang of trumpets sounded through the streets of Warsaw, calling the troops together for marching. Lodoiska listened to the noise with a trembling heart, the prelude to the thousand dangers which the beloved of her soul was about to encounter.

The Countess observed these preparations with less anxious solicitude, but with more of patriotic hope ; she had within her too much of the enthusiasm of a true daughter of Poland not to look with pride upon the warlike scenes with which those busy days were so replete. She even beheld her brother, the dearest object left her on earth, going forth at the head of his regiment, with a feeling of lofty and exulting gratification.

The clattering noise of sabres on the marble floor of the corridor announced the approach of Rasinski and his comrades, coming in to bid the ladies adieu. They were all dressed in full uniform, handsomely accoutred with sashes and swords, and the chako with its waving plumes ornamented their heads. Military array generally imparts a martial bearing to both body and mind. The men were, therefore, less affected at the moment of actual leave-taking than their previous mood would have led one to suppose. Rasinski pressed his sister to his breast with fraternal tenderness, and said, in a firm, manly voice :

" We are going forth in a noble cause ; let no sorrow or repining take possession of our souls ; let it breathe nothing but a holy fervor, burning within us in a clear flame, in our country's behalf. We will purify our desecrated altars, erect new hearths for our scattered household-gods, again plant the standard of the Jagellonians on our frontiers, and cause their hallowed ensigns once more to shine upon the glory of our nation ! Farewell, beloved sister ; let thy blessing and thy prayers rest not upon me, nor upon us, but upon our arms only ; offer up thy orisons to the Almighty for victory alone ! Whether we fall, or whether we return, matters nothing, as long as the white eagle of Poland soars aloft in the clear sky of Liberty ! Fare thee well ! May God preserve thee for happier days ! "

The arm, which in prophetic assurance he had raised aloft, now dropped to his side ;

EGHTEEN HUNDRED AND TWELVE ; OR,

once more he kissed his sister, imprinted a kiss also on Lodoiska's pale cheek, then left the apartment with hasty strides, and rushed out to throw himself on his steed.

Jaromir clasped his bride to his heart amid the scalding tears of youthful separation. That heart beat high in anticipation of battling for his country's welfare, yet it bled at the separation from the one to which it was bound. Lodoiska could not weep, for a shuddering chill, more cruel than the acutest pain, congealed her tears. Her ashy lips and cheeks, her feverish trepidation alone revealed the measure of agony she endured at this solemn moment.

With regard to the other three young men, though not being so near to Lodoiska's heart, they felt heavily the hour of parting. With a silent shake of the hand, they bade all adieu.

And now the trumpets without sent forth their loud, shrill call. The noise of many horsemen was heard. The Countess hastened to the window. It was Rasinski's new regiment, which came dashing up before the palace to receive their leader. The regimental band, discoursing patriotic music, preceded the cavalcade; some of the officers who had ridden on before, came up at a short gallop to salute Rasinski. Mounted on his Arabian grey, the latter, in manly beauty and with the looks of a hero, issued from the gate of the court. He was followed by Jaromir on a slender chestnut-colored hunter, that flew over the ground with the grace of a roe; a few moments after Boleslaus issued forth on a black charger, its mane floating wildly about its proud neck.

Now was heard the loud greeting of the warriors, welcoming their chief; the band struck up once more, the banners fluttered in the morning breeze, the polished arms and helmets glittered in the sun, the horses stamped and snorted, plumes and panaches waved, and the exciting spectacle grew momentarily more animated. The exulting and exalted feeling which penetrated the bosom of the Countess at the sight of this brave band, persuaded her that the same sight would assuage Lodoiska's grief, and brace her up to a noble exertion of strength. She vent, therefore, to the sorrowing girl and summoned her affectionately to follow her out on the balcony to witness the departure of the troops.

"Rouse yourself, take courage," she said, mildly but importunately; "every vigorous exercise of the will becomes a defence against the pain which threatens to overwhelm us. You will derive strength and consolation from seeing your beloved, as a man and a hero, bravely going forth to battle for his country. Love is nurtured by respect, and with love

also fortitude to endure and to suffer. Come, arise, and exhibit a hopeful spirit to the departing friend."

Lodoiska found herself wonderfully strengthened by these mild but firm remonstrances. She felt it in her loving heart to be a duty incumbent upon her to alleviate instead of aggravating the hour of parting. Resolutely girding up her strength, she followed the Countess, who conducted her through the adjoining saloon out upon the balcony.

The very sight of the dazzling crowd of warriors was refreshing to Lodoiska's deeply wounded bosom. The bells of the cathedral just then commenced ringing, and the morning-masses were heard chiming in with the boisterous notes of war. The blue vault of the sky bent over the scene; the birds twittered merrily among the gently murmuring leaves; the bright morning breathed its vivifying influence into every breast.

Rasinski noticed the ladies on the balcony; he nodded to them with a friendly smile. His countenance bore the stamp of a noble enthusiasm; every trace of sorrow had vanished, for this iron spirit ruled his most poignant feelings. He wished to appear before his men with unclouded brow, so that the cheerful confidence of their chief might also inspire them with courage and hope; he willed it, willed it firmly, and thence it became possible for him to do it. The appearance of the ladies, therefore, did not disconcert him; without turning his eye from his men, or neglecting the most trifling punctilio, he contrived to assure his sister that he was fully aware of her presence and was glad of her encouraging sympathy. With Jaromir it was otherwise; he allowed himself to be diverted from the business in hand, and thus afforded his comrades an opportunity of indulging in a laugh at his expense; for while keeping his eyes riveted on the balcony he blundered with his horse right into the midst of his own troop, and thus threw both men and horses into a state of confusion. Boleslaus, on the other hand, fixed his undivided attention on his duty. With keen eye he inspected men, horses, accoutrements, saddle-gear and knapsacks; on one occasion only he threw a furtive glance to the female forms on the balcony, as if on some stolen or unlawful object.

The regiment was drawn up in front of the palace. The windows of every house were crowded with spectators of both sexes. Many a tear trembled in the eye of beauty, or hid itself behind the veil which, according to ancient custom on all public occasions, distinguishes the Polish maiden from the married woman.

"Attention! Right dress!" sounded Rasinski's word of command, and spurring his

horse, he flew like an arrow to the end of the right wing. The profoundest silence now reigned; every eye was fixed on the commander, every ear eagerly listening for his word.

"Draw sabres!" he cried, and the glittering weapons appeared. "Front rank, forward!—halt! To the right, forward!—march!"

The front broke up, the soul-stirring notes of the trumpets and bugles sounded loudly; Rasinski galloped to the head of his regiment and defiled past the palace windows. On coming in front of the balcony, he gave a military salute, at the same time casting a parting glance upwards. The Countess, in answer to this, cast a white silken scarf, which she had thrown lightly around her neck, down to the rider. This was done in conformity with the ancient custom of Poland, which accorded to the females the privilege, publicly, with their own hands, of bestowing upon the warrior when going forth to battle, some token to take with him. Rasinski caught it on the point of his sword, and immediately wound it around his arm. The whole regiment gave a loud approving hurrah. Directly there flew and fluttered handkerchiefs, breast-knots, scarfs, ribbons and veils from every window. The sister did not give her token to the brother, nor the bride to her affianced, the wife not to the husband; no, the daughter of Poland gave it to the son of Poland. The warriors caught the sweet memorials with their swords and lances. One beautiful lady, with rich, dark-brown waving hair, standing at a window opposite the palace, tore her veil in two, and let both the halves drop down. By chance it happened to be Louis and Bernard who seized them on the points of their lances. The fiery Bernard returned an impassioned glance, and in wanton boldness even threw up a kiss; the beauty smiled graciously. Louis saluted her also, but more sedately; he thought of another form, which ever floated before his imagination as in the waste and boundless domain of things irrecoverably lost; but nevertheless the beams of that soft and friendly eye touched him with warm and gentle impulse. Bernard cried out in French:

"I am not a Pole, but I fight cheerfully for Poland!"

His reward was a rose, which the lady plucked from a rose-bush standing by her in the window. He caught it dexterously in its fall, put it into a button-hole on his breast, returned one more grateful salute to the charming giver, and then galloped swiftly back to his place in the ranks.

Lodoiska was undetermined what to do. She could not throw down her veil without

betraying her deep grief and swollen eyes to the gaze of the world. But she quickly loosened a breast-knot from her bosom, which she let fall, intending it for Jaromir, but the envious wind carried it away, and Boleslaus was the happy man to whose hand it came. He pressed it to his lips, and threw an ardent look up to Lodoiska. Jaromir noticed it, and conceived the suspicion that it was not meant for him, though Lodoiska immediately let fall a second, which, wafted by a more favorable breeze, landed of itself on Jaromir's shoulder. As suddenly inflamed by anger as by love, he had also as quickly forgiven as he became incensed, looked up to his betrothed with a loving eye, took the knot, and then fastened it as a proud trophy on his breast.

The troops now turned into the small street in which Alisette dwelt. She stood at the window looking at the passing horsemen. She saluted all the officers with whom she was acquainted, and was saluted in return by almost every one, for they all knew the charming songstress. With true French naïvete she wafted her adieus to certain individuals, now with a merry laugh, now with a saddened smile, and when any one rode close under the not very high window, she wafted him a sweet-sounding adieu. Bernard in particular received an uncommonly friendly salute of this description, to which he responded in the same manner, though not without a vague sensation of regret that he now parted, perhaps for ever, from this fascinating creature. His former suspicions against her would have been dissipated, had he not observed, as he once more looked back toward her, how evidently her countenance changed as Jaromir, who was riding a few files behind, approached her window. She took out a bouquet of roses and forget-me-nots, which she till then had kept concealed, threw it to the handsome young cavalier, and by words and looks bid him the most emphatic farewell. Jaromir, blushing from contending emotions, came to a halt, spoke a few moments with the bewitching young girl, and thanked her in apparently the tenderest accents.

Ahem! thought Bernard, with a shrug, for he espied Lodoiska, who, in order yet longer to gaze after the troops, had gone to a window in the saloon, and had been an eye-witness of the little scene, without Jaromir's being aware of it. Soon after, he tried to seize a moment to ride up to Jaromir. Having come up with him, he said, in a half-jesting, half-threatening manner:

"Recreant! what hast thou done? Really, dost not blush for having offered thy last parting salute to that seductive Phryne?"

She is the last one on whom thy lingering thoughts dwell!"

"No, upon honor, no!" cried Jaromir; "my heart now as ever beats only for Lodiska; it belongs to her. But Alisette was always so friendly towards me!"

"Yes; but too friendly! Take heed to thyself," answered Bernard.

Jaromir smiled.

"There is no danger! But ride back to thy station now—for we come directly to the bridge of Praga, which we must pass in the exactest order."

The column here stopped in its march—for several other detachments flowed in at this point, where several cross-streets meet. Colonel Regnard, too, was to be seen at the head of his regiment. The order of march was, however, quickly arranged. Rasinski with his cavalry led the van. He was followed by a detachment of dragoons. Regnard with his infantry closed in upon them, and then the artillery brought up the rear.

It was a gorgeous spectacle to see these troops covering the long bridge, while the splendid Vistula mirrored from its placid waters the dazzling pageant moving in many variegated forms. Both banks of the stream were lined with multitudes of people. Far and wide re-echoed the loud huzza. Shoutings, waving kerchiefs, and streamers shone in the sunbeams. The clanging of arms; the tramp and neighing of gallant steeds; the deafening thunder of cannon—all this completed the imposing and warlike panorama. Individual importance rose more proudly in the sublime aspect of these masses. Private grievings and troubles were sunk in the tumultuous waves which heaved and sustained the whole; and filled only by a chivalric longing for the battle, manly hearts looked joyfully forward to the future.

CHAPTER XXV.

EVERYTHING on the estate of Count Dolgorow near Smolensko, on the Dnieper, was in the greatest commotion. This was occasioned by two items of news received but a few hours before by the inmates of the castle, as well as by the inhabitants of the dependent villages around, which had created a general though widely contrasted state of excitement. The first item was of a joyful nature; for an *avant-courier* had announced the speedy arrival of the Count from St. Petersburg. He, with his family, had for two years sojourned in foreign lands. His vassals, during this period, had felt the loss

of his severe, but in their estimation, just and impartial jurisdiction. A general joy, therefore prevailed, on hearing of his speedy return.

But this joy was materially disturbed by another piece of intelligence, which the overseer of the estate had brought from Smolensko. The enemy, it was said, had actually passed the barriers of the Empire—the war had commenced, and the Russian army was already retreating at every point before the irresistible power of the French Emperor.—As usual, in such cases, the rumors were much exaggerated. Some pretended already to know that Prince Bagration had been completely routed. According to other reports, General Barclay de Tolly had fallen in with Marshal Davoust, and after a sanguinary battle, been obliged to seek safety in retreat. The greatest consternation had, therefore, seized upon the inhabitants; for, ignorant of the distances, they considered themselves on the very brink of destruction. The people gathered before the gates of the castle, asking for counsel and help. The overseer had great difficulty in pacifying them. He succeeded, however, by representing that the coming of the master had undoubtedly no other object than to provide for his own people in these critical circumstances. Notwithstanding, a pusillanimous terror prevailed in most minds, and the aged and venerable clergyman of the village, Gregorius, was obliged to employ all the influence and dignity of his office in order to raise the confidence of the desponding.

"Fear not, my friends," said this worthy priest, stepping into their midst. "The people of Rurik are under the protection of our Heavenly Father and all the Saints. Do you imagine that they will forsake us? Do you imagine that they would abandon our holy altars to the profane insults of a ruthless enemy?—Never, I tell you, can these aliens subjugate the old stock of the Russes! The holy St. Ivan, whose golden cross glitters on the cupola of the cathedral at Moscow, is mightier than the many thousands which the foreign conqueror leads. I tell you, it is the star of their perdition which they follow; bloody it blazes before them, and lures them on to certain destruction! As the hosts of Pharaoh perished in the billows of the Red Sea, so these sacrilegious miscreants will languish and die in our forests of a thousand years' growth, and which no axe has ever touched. The howling wolf shall gnaw their bleached bones; the croaking raven shall fatten on their carcasses; for with us is the Lord of Hosts—the bands of angels. We are shielded by the holy mother of God."

"Be not faint-hearted, therefore, but arm yourselves as the champions of the holy St.

Ivan. From the Niemen, which bounds the kingdom of Rurik in the west, to the proudly flowing Volga—to the mountains of the Ural which tower above the uttermost boundaries of Europe, the enemy shall find no place of rest. The hut of the Russ is the seat of hospitality; but he will set it on fire from the flame of his own hearth sooner than it shall offer a shelter to the enemy, who has come to desecrate and despoil the sepulchres of our Czars, and to overthrow the altars of our God. Therefore, you must not flee, my friends, but you must fight: Let him that is not cut down by the axe of the husband take his death from the poisoned food which the wife sets before him. Do not tremble nor be dismayed; lament not; do not tear the silvered hair and the whitened beard. You shall yet live to see many happy days!"

Thus spoke the inspired priest to the assembled hordes of the Mugiks, who listened to him with mingled awe and surprise. He had dwelt among them full fifty years as their spiritual guide, and during four and seventy summers he had seen the ice on the rivers thaw away.

The castle was situated on an eminence from which might be seen for a great distance the Dnieper in all its windings. The river meandered between steep green hills at the base of which it ran along the road to Smolensko. The towers of that city, reddened by the evening sun, rose on the horizon. One of the boors who had kept his keen eye looking in that direction, suddenly cried out:

"There comes the master!"

All turned their looks the same way and burst simultaneously into a joyous shout on seeing three carriages approaching on the road. With loud jubilee they hastened down the eminence to greet the new-comers. It was, indeed, Count Dolgorow with his wife and their daughter, Feodorowna. The two ladies were seated in the first carriage. In the second was the Count with a stranger of a military aspect at his side.

On seeing the assembled serfs, the Count ordered the carriages to stop and dismounted. The serfs, with their hands crossed on their breasts humbly welcomed their master, endeavoring to kiss the hem of his garment. The women crowded with similar humility around the Countess. Feodorowna, of majestic figure, was the only one who would not suffer this servile homage, but reached out her hand in a friendly manner to the matrons and maidens who approached her. The Count after a few minutes repulsed the affectionate importunity of his serfs, but only in as far as they incommoded him. He and his lady spoke with kindness to the people. The priest, whose steps were weakened by age now, also, pressed through the crowd

and welcomed the Count with respect, but without servility or sycophancy.

"What! Father Gregorius! I am glad to see you," said Dolgorow. "You were the first one I thought of with uneasiness, fearing lest I should not be permitted to see you again. It affords me great pleasure that the sun of this spring yet shines upon you."

"My strength is yet unabated," replied the clergyman. "It is true I am every day liable to be called before the throne of the Almighty. But, thanks to his mercy, I am still enabled to discharge the duties on earth which the Lord has laid upon me."

In the meantime Feodorowna approached:

"Blessing and honor be upon your head, venerable Father! It is indeed a great joy to me to see you again, and in such health and cheerfulness."

"May the mother of God be with thee and preserve thee in her holy keeping," said the aged minister, while laying his hand on her gently bowed head. "The angels of the Lord have guarded thee kindly, my daughter, and thou hast come back more beautiful, than when, as a tender bud thou didst leave us. The saints have heard my prayers—for daily have I invoked them to grant thee their succor."

Thus spake the old man, looking affectionately at the fair maiden whose childhood and youth he had guided.

"Oh, certainly they have accompanied us with their protection," answered Feodorowna, with pious emotion; "for God has been with us in every extremity."

She seemed to wish to say something more, but stopped abruptly, being deterred by a glance from her father, to whom the great intimacy of his daughter with the old priest was disagreeable. Immediately afterwards the stranger, a large, well-formed man in the prime of life, stepped up to her and offered his arm to assist her in ascending the now steeper path.

The Count walked in the midst of his dependents, speaking to individuals among them, informing himself about their domestic affairs and the most noticeable events which had taken place in his absence.

"Thou hast lost thy wife, Isaac," he said to a boor well stricken in years.

"Yes, my gracious master," answered the old man. "She died last fall, and I have felt the want of a housekeeper ever since."

"Thy eldest son shall marry," answered the Count. "Wasilof's daughter will make him a good wife. I will arrange about the wedding one of these days."

The old man returned his most humble thanks for this command—for such was, in fact, the promised benefaction of the Count.

The overseer enquired timidly about news of the war.

"The enemy is marching to our frontiers," answered the Count. "He is pressing on in great numbers. My principal motive for coming to my estates is to take such measures as the war may render necessary."

"I heard to-day, in Smolensko—" began the overseer, with an air of importance and concern.

"Ah! probably the same silly stories with which they have persecuted me," interrupted the Count without giving any farther explanation.

The news-devouring overseer tried his luck again, remarking with an expression of anxiety:

"We were very much alarmed."

But the Count, who did not love to chat with his servants, without answering turned away to the priest.

"I shall want your assistance, Gregorius, to keep my subjects in good confidence and spirits, especially when they are needlessly alarmed by the spreading about of foolish rumors."

The overseer slid shyly off on one side, glad enough to escape thus easily the penalty for his impertinence.

Gregorius answered the Count:

"I will enkindle the hearts of the people in defence of the faith of their fathers—of the ancient throne of the Czars, and of our hallowed country."

"You will do well in this," answered the Count. "But hatred is more powerful than love, therefore, I would rather see that you filled their minds with implacable hatred to our enemies. Describe them as robbers and assassins, who come only to lay waste our fields, to desolate our villages and towns with fire and sword, to drive away our flocks and herds—to ravish our wives and daughters, and slay our men."

"They may do all these things and commit yet more atrocious deeds," answered Gregorius. "It would still be my duty as a priest to inculcate gentleness and a conciliating spirit towards them. But they come as the enemies of our God, the destroyers and polluters of our temples. These crimes we must avenge. All other goods, the perishable vanities of life, we must only defend."

A scowl on the Count's brow evinced his dissatisfaction with the priest's answer. But he said nothing, well knowing that he might sooner shake a mountain from its base than overcome the firmness and religious scruples of old Gregorius.

They had in the meantime reached the castle-gates. The Count entered his ancestral halls, while the people remained

without. Gregorius was the only one who followed.

"Wait for us in the dining-hall, worthy Father," the Count said. "As soon as we have taken off our travelling dresses we will look for you there. I myself will be with you in a few minutes, to consult with you respecting a matter of great moment."

With these words he disappeared through the door which led to his own private rooms. The ladies also retired to their chambers, to change their habiliments. The stranger was conducted into the reception-room.

Gregorius entered the hall where he was to await the Count. More than two years had passed away since he last entered these apartments. The hall was built in an antique and singularly mixed style. Four very high bow-windows in gothic frames looked out over the landscape towards the river, so that the glowing sky of evening threw its golden glories into the vaulted apartment. The walls were adorned with black marble pillars, between which were suspended in old-fashioned frames the portraits of the family ancestors. The flooring was of wood, as were also the side-panels, having gilt edges and divided into compartments in the style of the time of Louis XIV. Two old-fashioned chandeliers hung from the vaulted roof, and against the walls round about stood large branching candelabra of bronze. The whole bespoke splendor and wealth, yet presented a gloomy sombre aspect, extending even to the prospect and sky, which, as seen through the old gothic bow-windows assumed the character of autumn rather than Russian spring-time—the month of June.

Gregorius, seating himself in one of the old-fashioned arm-chairs, surrendered himself to his grave and mournful thoughts:

"I have lived four and seventy years, and my life has ever been one of peace and devotion—for no malignant influence threatened the sanctuary entrusted to my care. And now I must, in the far advanced decline of my days, my steps tottering on the borders of the grave, exchange the olive-branch of peace for the sword of vengeance. But be it as the Lord wills! His is the fructifying dew, the gentle rain, the golden beam of the sun. His also are the lightnings and thunders of the darkened heavens. He sends out his messengers and servants to bless and to slay, to instruct the godly and guide them to Himself, or to hurl the evil-doers into the darkest pit of hell from whence they have risen. Gregorius bows his grey head submissively to the will of the Father!"

During this monologue of the old man, as he sat with his face turned towards the setting-sun—fitting emblem of his life—the folding-doors of the hall parted and Count

Dolgorof entered. In spite of his haughty step and imperious look flashing from beneath his lofty brow, his whole being seemed bowed down with grief and discomfort.

"I have to speak with you on weighty matters, father Gregorius," he began, stepping up to the old man to prevent his rising out of the chair. "We must seize these moments while we are alone."

Saying this he drew up a chair and seated himself opposite to the priest.

"The times are serious," answered Gregorius, slowly shaking his venerable head:

"Before discussing matters concerning the country and other public affairs, I have something to say which concerns myself alone. The strange gentleman who accompanies me is the Prince Ochalskoi, a Colonel in the army of our sovereign. I wish to betroth my daughter Feodorowna to him; but she is repugnant to the alliance, and endeavors to avoid my paternal commands by the foolish resolve to enter a convent and take the veil. You, Gregorius, possess great influence over her mind, and I expect from you that you will use it to bring her back to her duty."

The priest was about to answer, but Dolgorof interrupted him:

"Let me finish, father. You do not know, perhaps, how much I have sacrificed in these eventful days for the good of my country. My ardent desire of occupying an important position, to obtain offices and posts of honor, through which I might share in the direction of public affairs, induced me to put everything at the hazard. My great wealth is shattered, and still I have not reached the goal which was to remunerate me for all my losses. My daughter's marriage with the Prince would effect this. Not his incalculable riches only, but his powerful connexions will afford me the means. Yes, I am already under such great obligations to him that it is only through his influence that I can sustain the position which I now occupy. Her father's honor and happiness is at stake. You will now be able rightly to comprehend what is the duty of Feodorowna. To you, reverend father, I look for succor. She has confidence in you. I might use coercion; but I would gladly avoid resorting to any extreme. I am fearful, besides, that the princely pride of the wooer will forbid thus accepting a bride brought to his arms, not by choice or persuasion, but by force—for he loves Feodorowna."

Gregorius observed a few moments' silence, and then answered complacently but firmly:

"It grieves me much to see father and daughter at variance. But I know the heart of Feodorowna; it is noble, generous, kind, and good. If it has turned to love holy things;

if she is truly minded to take leave of this deceitful world, and to consecrate her days to pious retirement, the servant of the Lord may not turn her steps aside from this safest and purest path to eternal happiness."

The Count rose abruptly, as he looked at the priest with fierce and rolling eyes:

"What! Do I meet with opposition from you also? Does it belong to the calling of a minister of religion to protect and encourage disobedient children? But know, that if you should urge matters to an extremity, I will do likewise, and the issue will prove whether the obstinacy of a girl, even when seconded by a priest, will be able to contravene the will and determination of a father."

Gregorius looked earnestly at the Count, but without anger.

"You misunderstand me very much, Count," he answered, "if you believe that I would countenance or protect a daughter's disobedience against her father. It is rather the reverse; for I intend to examine her, whether she does act indeed in obedience to the command of her Heavenly Father. You will not dispute that His claims are superior to yours."

The Count compressed his lips in anger, but kept silence. He walked rapidly up and down the hall for some time, while Gregorius remained quietly seated in his chair, with grave, pious aspect, as the glowing refraction of the evening-sky shone around his silvered locks. Dolgorow stopped before him and said with forced composure:

"Be reasonable, Gregorius, comply with my wishes. Remember that there are many things which you will have to ask for at my hands. You wish to have new decorations for your church; these shall not only be granted, but far surpass your expectations. The sacred structure shall be built entirely new from the foundation. The image of the holy Virgin—"

"Would you bribe the Lord of heaven and earth?" answered Gregorius with a smile. "Oh! sir Count—for thirty years have I lived on this estate under your government, and yet you know me so imperfectly. Your father—"

"Enough!" interrupted the Count, moodily. "I did hope to gain my object by gentle means; but your stubbornness compels me to use harshness. Well, then, you may have your wish, and Feodorowna may make the experiment whether she possesses power to resist her father, who is irrevocably resolved upon this marriage."

"The choice of a husband depends upon you," answered Gregorius; "but her will is still left free, whether she will remain a virgin and take the veil of the convent—for she was born free, and not your vassal."

"She is—" wildly exclaimed the Count, still more exasperated by the priest's imper-
turbable calmness, but stopped suddenly short, for the door opened and the Countess entered the room. "To-morrow we will speak further about the matter," he said quickly, and in a low tone, as he rose to meet his lady. With all the skill of a courtier he could conceal every passion of his soul behind a smiling expression of features. With the easiest manner he said to the Countess :

"Welcome, my love—welcome to these well-known halls. I hope that the many cares which even now beset us will not prevent our being right happy in our domestic quiet—for a few days at least; for our duties will not allow our guest and myself to stay here very long."

"I hope so too," answered the Countess, "though I have no joyful anticipations of the future in my heart; for what horrors are not in store for our country in the course of the few next months—months which were wont to bring us nothing but pleasure."

"I hope, however, that the winter which in this country is so severe and inclement will this time become its best safeguard. The terrors which seem ready to overwhelm Russia are more dreadful in appearance than in reality; the enemy has no idea of the walls and ramparts behind which this empire is able, for seven months at least, to defy every attack. We may, perhaps, be called upon to sacrifice one year's harvest and ten year's after-growth of our boundless forests, but I fear no other mischief. If we surrender our soil to the enemy for one summer season, it will in the next give back the loss when manured with their blood. The great conqueror of nations may be invincible in battle; it remains to be seen whether he can gather harvests from fields of sand and ashes, or shield his warriors under the bare heavens from our wintry blasts. While we are speaking, he must have crossed the Niemen; it is his Rubicon; the dazzling fortunes of Caesar had a melancholy conclusion. Have you not, reverend father," turning to Gregoriou, "also a strong hope, that Russia will rise victorious out of this conflict?"

"The energy of her people and the grace of her God will preserve her," answered the priest. "If every community will treat these invaders of our sanctuaries in the same manner that I have reason to expect will be the course pursued by the flock entrusted to me, the host of Xerxes would not have power to enslave or subdue our country."

Prince Ochalskoi entered, arrayed in the uniform of his regiment. Dolgorow greeted him, and drew him immediately into conversation.

"I am much pleased," he proceeded, "that

you have been so active in using your influence with the people, Father Gregoriou; for one of the main reasons for my visiting my estates at this juncture is to consult with you and to make known the Emperor's commands on this subject. It has been resolved in General Council at St. Petersburg that we shall let the enemy enjoy the show of victory for a season, in order to render its actual possession more certain to ourselves. Our armies will offer resistance only in circumstances where the enemy must purchase every advantage at an enormous sacrifice. It will be in vain for him to hope for a battle; in vain for him to exhaust the strength of his troops in unremitting marches and manoeuvres, in order to overtake the phantom of conquest ever fleeing before him. He will nowhere find a spot for his weary soldiers to rest upon; nothing but a waste, howling wilderness will be there to receive him, until dejection and finally mutiny shall dissolve the bonds which hold army and commander together."

"Heaven grant," said the Countess, half-sighing, "that the plan may succeed—that so many and great sacrifices may not be offered in vain."

"What will be sacrificed," replied Ochalskoi, "but a few villages and towns, which are as nothing in the immeasurable extent of our Empire! And to those who may lose anything, the munificence of the Emperor will amply make it up."

"But where is Feodorowna?" enquired Dolgorow, who had already looked towards the door several times with an unquiet glance. "Go," he said to a menial standing at the door, "and announce to the Countess Feodorowna that her presence is desired in the hall."

The man departed and returned in a few minutes, stating that there were some young girls from the village with the Countess in her room.

"No doubt her former playmates," remarked the mother, "whom she has already invited to visit her."

"We shall have to wait an hour longer, then, I suppose," said Dolgorow vexedly. "At all events, tell the Countess that we expect her presence at the supper-table, and see to it that supper is soon served."

CHAPTER XXVI.

FEODOROWNA had scarcely entered her chamber before she sent her maid to call in

some young girls who had been brought up with her in the castle as her playmates. The lot of these poor girls appeared to her very sad indeed, for after having partly tasted of the happiness derived from more refined society and higher attainments, they had been under the necessity of returning to a vassalage and servitude, then first truly galling, and to share the miserable dwellings and scanty comforts of their parents. She therefore remembered with strong affection these companions of her childish days, with whom she had spent many an hour of unalloyed pleasure and innocent joy. They were three daughters of peasants with whom she had grown up—by name Kathinka, Olga, and Axinia, all about Feodorowna's own age, good creatures, but almost lost by that narrow, humbling, degrading servitude which is forced upon vassals on a Russian estate. They received therefore the caresses of Feodorowna and the presents which she had brought with her with a demure and abject show of humility and fear, without venturing to manifest any emotions of pleasure and gratification. Axinia, however exhibited a deep state of feeling ; she was more grateful for the love than for the gifts bestowed upon her ; but the tears which watered her cheeks seemed to indicate something different. Some secret grief seemed to weigh upon her mind. Feodorowna, enquiring with much interest into the circumstances of each one, sought also to ascertain the cause of Axinia's sorrow. But the bashful girl only looked down on the ground ; her tears flowed more abundantly, but she remained silent.

The servant entered, bringing the summons to appear at the supper-table.

"Do they expect me already?" asked Feodorowna.

"His Excellency," replied the servant, making a profound reverence, "has at least given orders to serve up without delay."

"Tell my father that I will come directly," answered Feodorowna, motioning to the menial to go. "I must now dismiss you," she said to the girls, "but come to me again very early to-morrow ; and I hope thus to see you every day, all the time that I shall be able to remain here."

The girls departed ; but Axinia delayed, as if she had something pressing on her mind.

"Dost wish for anything more, my dear?" asked Feodorowna, observing the countenance of the girl, and taking her hand in a friendly manner.

Axinia was unable to answer by reason of her tears ; she trembled visibly.

"Wilt thou not confide it all to me alone?"

"Yes, yes!" answered the weeping girl vehemently.

"Well, then, come to-morrow morning, or if thou canst, wait for me here in my room till after supper. It is so light now through the whole night, and Kathinka will inform thy father that thou wilt come home at a later hour."

Thankfully Axinia seized the hand of her benefactress, kissed it most passionately, and in scarce audible accents begged leave to remain. Feodorowna hastened down, that her father might not have to wait. She entered the hall, where the supper-table was already prepared. The father listened to her apology for her delay in gloomy silence. Ochalskoi addressed her with a few polite phrases in that cold measured tone which is always a better criterion of what is felt, than the words themselves convey. They sat down to table ; the conversation was constrained and carried on in monosyllables. The disagreeable feeling incident to a difference existing between those present froze up all free and cordial intercourse in the breast. Even Gregorius was unable to respond to the affectionate approaches of his pupil with that unembarrassed cheerfulness which usually prevailed between them ; for his feelings had also been saddened by the communications of the father. The supper was therefore speedily dispatched, and the party separated as frigidly as they had been sitting together. Gregorius took his leave ; the old man bid Feodorowna a tender but sorrowful good-night. She was moved by his pitying looks, which she rightly interpreted. She looked up to heaven, reflecting how all her painful trials originated with those parents to whom she all her life had manifested only the most devoted love, and for whose sake she had made a thousand self-sacrifices ! To conceal her tears, she retired in the deep recess of a window, and looked out upon the landscape, which still glowed in the half-subdued purple tints of the evening sky—the sun in these northerly latitudes scarcely dipping his disk beneath the horizon, so that the evening and morning auroras blend as it were together and illumine the whole of the warm nights of June by their roseate hues. The river pursued its silent course between the hilly banks ; two fishing boats lay gently rocking on its rippling surface ; an eagle sailed majestically with wide expanded wings high above the forest-tops of the opposite shore ; the towers of the fortified castle of Smolensko rose like black basalt pyramids out of the sea of molten gold which overflowed the horizon. A solemn stillness reigned throughout the entire landscape. Feodorowna gazed sadly across the fields and meadows in which she had played and frolicked in the days of her childhood.

"Ah!" she sighed to herself, "is my heart

an exotic on this soil? Has it not been nurtured from its bounty? Or have I become so spoiled and degenerated through the influence of gentler manners and a more genial sky, that I am unfitted for the rude North? The cradle of my existence does not look smilingly upon me as once it did, but seems dark and dismal, as if preparing to become my grave. Is there then nothing true and enduring in nature? Are not the most hallowed bonds changeable and deceptive? Gracious Father in heaven, forgive me! but as my native soil has become to me estranged and repulsive; it is as if the hallowed well-spring of life had become troubled, as if the heart of the child no longer can beat in unison and freedom with that of her parents! Cold as a serpent does this thought entwine itself around my poor heart! Can it then be true that there remains for me only a *duty* dictated by love, but that its living roots themselves are dead and decayed? No, no! it can—it must not be—it is nothing but the eternal arch-enemy who essays to delude me. Nature is holy, true, faithful; it is our heart which is base and degenerate. Holy mother of God! cleanse and purify mine, breathe back into it that once sacred love in which the guileless child once was so happy."

A grand and love-inspired resolve had during these moments ripened in her soul; she would cast herself in supplication, repentance and tears at the feet of her father and mother, and by prayers gain from their love what she had hitherto determined to secure by her own firmness. She turned hastily around; she saw that the hall was deserted; only a few menials remained busy removing the remains of the evening meal. Her parents—Prince Ochalskoi—all had already departed without the customary good-night; the latter probably, because Dolgorow had taken him by the arm, and led him to his own room to have a secret conference together. Deeply affected by a painful sense of finding the warm and swelling effusion of her heart thus violently checked, it required a strong effort to preserve her outward composure. The soothing thought then rushed to her heart, that an unfortunate fellow-being was waiting for her to alleviate her sufferings.

"I will lovingly take her to this wounded heart, whatever grief or trouble may assail and torture her; from me she shall meet with nothing but that love and sympathy after which I myself long so ardently in vain."

Filled with these thoughts she ascended to her chamber for the purpose of listening to Axinia's complaints.

As she quickly opened her chamber-door,

her nimble step being scarcely audible, she saw the girl on her knees in fervent prayer before an image of the Virgin which stood in a niche sunk into the opposite wall. In order not to disturb the fair devotee, Feodorowna stood fixed on the threshold. Axinia was kneeling in such a position that only one-half of her profile could be seen; but this was radiant with a magical rosy light which fell through a side-window into the chamber. She kept her alabaster arms raised and her hands folded towards heaven; the head was turned up to her celestial patroness. Her rich brown hair hung in two finely-plaited tresses over her bared neck. Feodorowna noiselessly closed the door behind her and advanced cautiously a few steps, so that she obtained nearly a full side-view of the girl's countenance. She then first observed the cold crystallized tears which trembled on her pale cheek to which even the strong rosy reflection of the evening sky could not impart a more joyous complexion. Her bosom rose and fell with deep but silent sighs, the lips moved as if whispering a prayer; the eye was so intently fixed on the countenance of the divine mother, her soul so fully gone forth in earnest importunate supplication that she was insensible to the approach of any one, even when Feodorowna stood close by her side. It was not until she mildly accosted her, by saying: "Axinia, thou prayest!" that she arose in great trepidation and terror, stood trembling before her loving mistress, and endeavored abjectly to stoop down and kiss her hand.

"No, no, not so!" said Feodorowna, taking her lovingly into her arms, and looking at her with ineffable kindness. "Be again the old intimate friend and playmate. Unburthen thy heart to me, poor thing, for I perceive that thou hast some deep sorrow."

"Oh! you will spurn me from you, despise me!" cried the girl, disengaging herself and wringing her hands in despair.

"Axinia, what aileth thee? Speak, tell it to me?" said Feodorowna in shuddering anticipation.

"No, no, I cannot!" cried the unhappy girl, covering her glowing face with both hands; the anguish of her heart almost depriving her of breath.

What need was there of more words! Every feature of the girl dissolved in agony and shame, spoke but too plainly.

"Axinia, thou art fallen?—Thou?" said Feodorowna, in a tone of the deepest concern, but not reproachful.

The girl as if crushed by an avalanche, sank to her feet.

"Crush the wretch in the dust!" she cried wildly; "Oh! have pity, and let me supplicate no longer!"

Feodorowna stooped down towards her compassionately, and tried to raise her up.

"Oh, thou unfortunate! stand up and compose thyself; thou hast sought consolation from me; I will not spurn thee away from me."

"No! let me lie prostrate at your feet," cried Axinia, as she buried her face in Feodorowna's garments and clung firmly to her knees.

Feodorowna laid her hands upon her head as if in benediction, and said:

"May God be thy judge! My heart, also liable to human errors, shall not condemn thee. I will weep with thee, will lighten thy trouble, if I can. Oh! thou wast so good, Axinia, thou wast kind even to me; thou hadst a soft affectionate heart; it cannot have become a bad one. I will not cast thee off, for I know what the heart of the wretched pines for. Have confidence in me; stand up, be frank and tell me every thing; it is the first step you must take in retrieving your error."

Axinia slowly raised her head and looked up at Feodorowna.

"Oh! you are gentle and kind as a saint," she exclaimed, while tears streamed from her eyes. She covered the hand with kisses which was held out to her as if for rescue, and suffered herself to be raised by her kind mistress, for her trembling limbs almost refused their aid. Feodorowna led her to a couch, and seated herself by her side.

A long interval elapsed before the tumult in Axinia's breast permitted her to make a confession of her crime. The Count had in his service a young German, named Paul, in the capacity of gardener, whom he had highly favored. This young man, had long cherished an attachment for the pretty Axinia, to which her father, Wasilof, was opposed, as the Count was absent, and his approbation was indispensable. The old man, the father, also entertained scruples because Paul professed the Protestant faith. Axinia, however, had in the meantime bestowed upon him her warmest affections, and they had long mutually cultivated their secret desires. At the approach of the vernal season, which prompts every germ with a sweet impulse passion in these young hearts became too powerful for the strict injunctions of duty. Paul, in whose German breast the abject sentiments of vassalage could not take root, believed himself, moreover, possessed of an inherent right to exercise the prerogatives of a free man, and imagined that if Axinia once were his wife by the ties of love, the law also would yield to his wishes. With reckless importunity he urged the loving, yielding maiden; her resistance grew weaker and weaker, and finally utterly evaporated

in the sweet intoxication of her susceptible heart. His fervent entreaties and burning kisses gained the victory over her tears, her apprehensive sighings. She awoke only when too late from the blissful agony of her delirium, and then with horror first recognised the true aspect of the deed, and became aware of the adder concealed under the roses upon which she had reposed in her dreams of happiness.

Her heart filled with mortal anguish, she closely concealed herself in her father's cottage, not even again seeing her lover. Anxious sleepless nights succeeded to days of anguish. Thus passed a whole month. Paul, in the meantime, wandered about, silent and distracted. The intelligence of the Count's speedy arrival inspired him with new life. He resolved to disclose every thing to his master, to whom he was much attached, and beg the beloved from his hands. Mingling with the crowd, he hastened to meet him, indulging a rather trembling hope. The first thing which he heard, on his drawing near, was the promise given by Dolgorow to marry his beloved Axinia to the son of old Ivan. He knew that the Count never recalled such resolutions and promises. In mortal agony he hastened to Axinia, who had stayed at home, sad and silent, while the rest were welcoming the returning lord and his family; for she dared not venture to present herself before the eyes of her much-loved mistress. While Paul yet tarried with Axinia in dumb despair, both being at a loss what to do in their extremity, the message arrived from Feodorowna, summoning her to attend her former play-mate at the castle. Impelled by the strength of her love, and the misery which every moment rendered more imminent, necessity forced her to act, and she resolved to disclose every thing to her mistress, and strengthened by the hope emanating from this resolve, she presented herself at the castle. She had now accomplished this resolution, and her mishap had met with a consoling, soothing sympathy, and her error a kind forgiveness.

When Feodorowna had fully heard Axinia's confession, she endeavored by kind words to encourage the desponding heart of her friend.

"All may yet be well, Axinia; I will to-morrow morning, as early as practicable, entreat my father to give his consent to your marriage with Paul. Some recompense will be found for the promise given to old Ivan. Should my father think like myself, he will consider the promotion of your marriage with Paul a duty from which he cannot absolve himself. Now, go thy way home and to rest in good hope; it is now too late for to-day; but quite early to-morrow morning I

will send for Paul and speak with him myself. Now, good night; dry up thy tears, Axinia; God has seen thy repentance and thy sorrow; he will forgive thee; and if thou hast endured bitter days and disconsolate nights, believe me, thou art not the only unhappy one on the earth."

Feodorowna turned quickly away after saying these words. Covering her face with her handkerchief she sank weary and exhausted on the pillows of her couch. Axinia, with a feeling of profound gratitude, took the hand of her mistress, passively hanging down from the couch, impressed upon it a thousand tearful kisses, and then silently left the room. Every thing was already hushed in the building; Jeanette, the waiting-maid, a native of Alsace, who spoke both German and French, and who had been taken into Feodorowna's service only a few weeks previous at St. Petersburg, was yet in the ante-room waiting her mistress's orders. She accompanied Axinia to the gate, which the old porter opened, gruff and grumbling though he did it. In accordance with the regulations of the house, now more strictly enforced as the master had returned, all the servants and menials had long ago retired to their respective abodes. However gladly, therefore, Axinia would have imparted the fortunate turn which their affairs had taken to her lover, knowing how surely he was anxiously waiting for such a communication, it was impossible for her to effect it now. Somewhat frightened by the lateness of the hour, she speedily trod her way to her father's cottage in which she passed the first night for a month without sitting on her bed in hopeless misery till break of day.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IT was quite late before slumber visited the weary eyelids of Feodorowna; she did not, in consequence, awake till the sun was already far advanced in his diurnal journey. On ringing the bell for her maid, the girl entered, much excited, and with tears in her eyes.

"What is the matter with thee, Jeanette?" she asked in surprise.

"Ah, gracious Countess, how dreadfully do they abuse people in this country! the unfortunate man will certainly not survive the horrible punishment!"

"Who?" asked Feodorowna, in astonishment. "What has happened? Who is abused?"

Amid sobs and tremblings, Jeanette stammered out:

"The Count is too much exasperated! Oh, heavens! if such a thing should ever happen to me? His young blood is—and forty blows of the knout! He sunk to the ground pale as death, only on hearing the Count give the command."

Feodorowna felt more dead than alive.

"Who? who?" she cried, as if beside herself, and recoiled with a blanched cheek on Jeanette's uttering:

"Paul!"

The girl rushed to the assistance of her mistress, who was on the point of fainting away. But her dizziness was only momentary; she collected herself by a strong effort, and exclaimed:

"Give my orders immediately to the people to stop; I will be responsible! Haste, quick, before it is too late!"

Jeanette flew like a hunted roe through the ante-room, down the stairs, and into the court-yard, where three menials were already busy tying up the unfortunate wretch to the whipping-post.

Feodorowna meanwhile dressed herself in the greatest haste, threw a shawl over her shoulders, and hastened with uneven steps to her father, for she already guessed at the cause of this new misfortune. She found him walking up and down in his room in a furious state. He received her with scowling looks and the harsh words:

"What wilt thou?"

"Pardon for the unfortunate man, my father! Oh! recall your precipitate command. It was not your humane heart which pronounced that dreadful sentence."

"Dost know his crime?" cried the Count, rolling his eyes wrathfully. "All these foreigners are hypocrites and traitors; the hour has arrived when vengeance will overtake them. They pretend to insist that our laws do not apply to them; they shall at least learn that we have power to chastise them, and that those who will obey no law shall also enjoy the protection of no law. Should I suffer such an outrage against the sacred person of the master to go unpunished, I should be worthy the contempt of my vassals. To lift his hand against his rightful master! It was wanting only that a daughter who denies the obligations of filial obedience should stand up in the defence of a criminal and mutinous menial!"

Feodorowna's courage did not desert her. However much alarmed by this harsh reception, she approached her father with the most affecting appeals.

"I am not acquainted with the trespass of the unfortunate man; I only know that his punishment is cruel—it is terrible. Have

the milder customs which you have witnessed in other lands not made you sick of the cruel, inhuman and bloody laws which hold their sway over the inhabitants of this country? Besides, I was already determined to move your heart this very day to an act of grace towards this unhappy youth. His destiny is linked to that of—”

“I believe thou art in league and concert with my lawless and incontinent servants,” cried the Count, angrily. “So, it seems that thou are cognizant of the crimes here committed earlier than myself? Who has dared to make my daughter a confidant of a crime which ought never to be named to a maiden's ear?”

A blush of anger and shame rose to the cheek of Feodorowna. She was about answering in the full dignity of a conscious rectitude, but quelled the rising ebullition, and said gently:

“The playmate of my childhood, dearest father, the unhappy Axinia, confided to me late last evening, amid tears of anguish and despair, the nature of her offence. What can be more natural than that she should wish to pour the sorrows of her heart into the bosom of sisterly affection? No, my father, you cannot be so unjust toward your daughter as to throw any injurious suspicion upon her!”

While speaking these words, Feodorowna looked so grieved at her father, with her moist and lustrous blue eyes, that even he in his stern anger could not resist a gentler emotion. With great seriousness he said:

“I might possibly have pardoned the audacity and folly of the young man, being a stranger, for so lightly esteeming the honor of one of Russia's daughters as to trample it under foot, if with humility and at the proper season he had confessed his offence. Why suffered he me yesterday to give my word? Have I ever forfeited it even to the meanest of my vassals? Should I ever dare to do such a thing without blushing for myself? The lad, however, in cowardly consciousness of his guilt, dared not acquaint me with his delinquency by writing to St. Petersburg, as he might have done. And this morning quite early he comes to me like a madman, imperiously demanding what he ought to have petitioned for in deepest humility and contrition; and on my stern refusal he throws himself upon me like a savage beast, and threatens to take my life with that knife yonder!”

Dolgorow here pointed to a garden-knife lying on the table.

“Oh, pardon the delirium of a desperate man,” entreated Feodorowna, “and crown the work of mercy by a still nobler act of humane compassion!”

“Enough!” answered the Count, sternly; “let what is past take its course! She is indeed an amiable daughter who wishes to see the murderer of her father rewarded for his deed!”

“Oh, God of mercy and power!” cried Feodorowna, wringing her hands in despair; “must this shocking inhumanity then be perpetrated! And my prayers cannot save the unfortunate wretch! Father! father! there is a God in heaven; he will one day judge you as you have judged others! What mercy can you hope for when you steel your heart against all compassion! Oh, land of horrors! where despotism bears ruthless sway! Father, listen to the prayers of your daughter; extend the divine prerogative of mercy!”

Feodorowna, with her arms raised in a supplicating attitude, stood pale and trembling before her father, and was about sinking to his feet, when a female voice was heard outside, and immediately after Axinia rushed in with dishevelled hair.

“Let me, let me! I must, I must!” she cried in wild accents, tearing herself away from the servants, who endeavored to keep her back; and then throwing herself at the feet of Dolgorowshe cried, while embracing his knees:

“Mercy! mercy!”

Her voice was choked by breathless anxiety; she pressed her face violently against the feet of her master, who looked at her only the more sternly, and though feeling himself in the wrong, was yet too proud to give ear to the voice of humanity.

“Trouble me not, shameless wench!” he exclaimed. “Thank my kindness that I am willing to hide thy disgrace by an honorable marriage!”

Axinia relaxed her hold, and feebly disengaging her arms, raised her pale, despairing countenance; she then first observed Feodorowna.

“Oh! intercede for me—pray for me!” she said faintly, endeavoring to crawl to her upon her knees, but sunk, her face downwards, exhausted on the floor.

Feodorowna struggled with a fearful resolution; her bosom heaved and trembled like an aspen-leaf. Finally she approached her father with tottering steps.

“Father!” she cried, “show mercy! I will, I must! Oh! on this bench of torture the ‘yes’ is extorted from me! Well, then, be it so!—the rescue of two innocent victims is at stake! I cannot suffer them to bleed—I dare not do it. Grant them pardon—and I am Ochalskoy's wife!”

More her overstrained powers did not permit her to utter; like a corpse she sank insensible into Dolgorow's arms.

He let her gently down into a chair, and then rang the bell.

"Go down into the court-yard and let the gardener Paul be cast loose; his punishment is deferred for the present," he cried to the servant. "Call the Countess's maid at the same time; she is taken unwell."

Feodorowna sat motionless, her head leaning backward in the chair, her white arms passively hung down, her azure eyes hid beneath the closed eye-lids. Axinia still lay on the ground in a state of insensibility. A tiger would have been moved by this spectacle of heart-rending misery, this touching image of self-devoted suffering. But the shaft recoiled from the cold and hardened breast of Dolgorowas if encased in steel armor—his sensibilities and better impulses being blunted and obliterated by the contaminating heartlessness prevalent among the higher classes, which from his youth had poisoned and indurated his soul.

"It will pass," he thought to himself with indifference; for the sufferings of Feodorowna appeared to him as nothing more than the folly of a visionary; and Axinia's misery affected him not in the least, belonging as she did to a class of beings whom from a child he had looked upon as mere machines. He was now exceedingly rejoiced that this occurrence had been the means of removing the obstacles which no longer ago than yesterday stood immovably in the way of the success of his plans. He hastened therefore, to find Ochalskoi, in order to acquaint him with what had just taken place, and left Jeanette, who had just entered, to take care of her mistress. The latter soon re-opened her eyes, and shortly assisted the maid in calling Axinia back to life. When the girl finally awoke from her swoon, she looked wildly around, her eyes appearing to follow some object she was unable to name. At first the consolatory addresses of Feodorowna were spoken to deaf ears, but at length she was enabled to comprehend, as Feodorowna said to her:

"Compose thyself, Axinia; the frightful dream is past; thou wilt be happy!"

The tortured girl, on hearing this, sank into the arms of her benefactress, who extended them to receive her, and pressed her affectionately to her heart.

"Thou wilt be happy, Axinia," she cried once more: "but thou little knowest at what price!" was secretly re-echoed in her own breast.

Long did they keep each other in a close embrace; the deluge of sorrow and bliss which had buoyed up their hearts, had also overflowed and obliterated every barrier separating their conditions in life, and they embraced like those saved from shipwreck.

But Feodorowna's strength was once more deserting her.

"Oh, conduct me to my room! I am utterly exhausted!" she uttered, entreatingly.

Jeanette and Axinia led her slowly and cautiously to her chamber, where she found the solitude and rest which enabled her to contemplate the issue of the tangled web of her destiny with a steadier and clearer vision.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE solemn betrothal was to be celebrated forthwith. The proper nuptials must be delayed for some time, on account of some indispensable formalities; and it had to be determined by the course which events might assume when this festivity could most appropriately be consummated. Her father entertained no fears lest Feodorowna might retract, for he well knew that, from principle, she held a given promise to be too sacred a thing to be infringed upon under any pretext whatever.

Dolgorow and Ochalskoi went to wait upon the Countess, and impart the news to her, for, being habitually a late riser, she as yet knew nothing of what had taken place, but, as may easily be conjectured, was very much rejoiced at the information.

In the meantime Feodorowna had spent a sorrowful hour with Axinia in her room, when the girl first learned the whole chain of circumstances which had brought about the interview with her father. In order to inform Paul of what Feodorowna designed to do for them both, she had sought to speak with him from the earliest hour of morning, but without succeeding.

She was about setting out for the castle the third time as the overseer, who was Paul's bitter enemy, standing in the outer gate, was communicating with scornful expression the intelligence of Paul's impending punishment to those around him.

No sooner had she comprehended the dreadful import of this information, which she immediately suspected was connected with her own fortunes, than she beheld Paul in the court-yard tied up to the post of torture.

To have seen this, then to fly up the marble step of the castle, to press frantically through the crowd of menials to the Count's own room and to throw herself at his feet, was the work of a moment. Fortunately Jeannette had arrived at the right time with

Feodorowna's orders to postpone the punishment.

Paul was now untyed and conducted into a small room used for the confinement of prisoners. Axinia had at first some fears respecting him, but Feodorowna solemnly assured her that there was nothing more to fear. At the same time she sent down the order by Jeanette that Paul should immediately be set at liberty and brought into her presence.

Dolgorow sent to request his daughter to attend him. She went crushed, but yet composed—pale, but without tears. The parents were alone. Her father was more complacent than usual, and the mother also appeared kind.

"Thou wilt now yield obedience and comply with our wishes, Feodorowna?" she said in a mild tone. This, for several months, was the first expression of love from the mother's heart—a parent so ardently beloved and revered by the daughter.

"Yes, my mother," she replied; "I am ready to sacrifice the happiness of my life to a duty from which nothing can absolve me. But I make it an indispensable condition that I shall have full liberty to dispose of those two unfortunate persons."

"It is granted," said Dolgorow almost with an expression of kindness.

"I must stipulate for a second condition," continued Feodorowna. The step which I am about to take I must be allowed to carry into effect with perfect composure and womanly dignity. I will not venture to appear before my future husband with the distorted features of sorrow and pain; for my looks would too strikingly contradict the assent which my lips would have to utter. It would offend him, and I do not wish to do that—for from the moment that I select him for my husband he is entitled to my respect. I request, therefore, to be allowed the space of three days, in which to school my heart and to gather up my broken senses. The pious counsels of father Gregorius will stand me in stead in this painful conflict. With the rising of the fourth sun from this time I shall be ready to interchange the ring of betrothal with the Prince. Until then I beg to be left in my solitude."

"This also is granted thee," said the father. "Thou knowest that thy father and mother have always loved thee, and nothing but thy stubborn, incomprehensible disobedience could ever turn their hearts away from thee."

Feodorowna raised her eyes to heaven and sighed deeply. Oh, how gladly would she have given credit to these words! but she felt it to be impossible, for they were too much belied by acts. How were it possible

for truly kind and loving parents to consign their child to years, yea, a life-time of silent suffering? Besides, there were no looks of love to be discovered in their countenances or eyes—only mocking words of dead formality dictated by selfish policy.

Feodorowna returned to her room.

She found Paul in the ante-room. He was pale, and looked much troubled, for he had been too rudely tossed about on the raging storm of angry passions and soul-harrowing anxieties to gather hope and courage at once from the dawning of a milder sky. He now received new life, as it were, from the assurance which Feodorowna gave him that his fate rested entirely in her hands. She bid him follow her. When in the room she herself led him to the happy and blushing Axinia. She joined their hands together, and said:

"Be happy! You were not without guilt, but you have severely atoned for it. Consecrate now your affections by the holy bonds of matrimony. But, Paul, when that is done leave this country and return to thy native clime. Wo unto him who must call this his father-land! Happy is he who knows another home! I can protect you no longer than while I am here among you. It will probably be only a few weeks. As soon, therefore, as the way is open for you, go seek other lands where milder laws rule alike over all. Now leave me. Go, and may you be happy!"

She turned away to conceal the pains which this interview gave her.

Axinia, taking her hand, said timidly, but with an expression of the tenderest affection:

"Have you really forgiven me everything? Oh, do I deserve it? Oh, look at me kindly once more!"

Feodorowna turned round. She looked at her through her tears with a friendly smile:

"Thy heart is pure and undefiled! To those who love for the sake of love much is forgiven. I freely forgive thee all. And if the bloom of thy happiness could spring up from my grave, I would bless thee out of the cold and silent tomb! But, go—go!"

Silently they left the room.

"Heavenly Protectress! Thou gracious mother of God, who hast the power!" Feodorowna now breathed, bending the knee before the image of the Virgin; "grant me comfort and strength.. I put my trust in thy blessed mercy and grace! Thou wilt not leave me alone in this cold and dismal night of existence. The rays from thy gentle brow will illumine my path, even should the whole heavens be shrouded in blackness and wrath!"

A comforting calm entered her heart after this prayer. She accepted it thankfully,

blessing the hand which is able to heal our deepest wounds—the eye which never loses sight of us even in the darkest recess of the abyss. A ray of light seemed to pierce through the black cloud of her future and kindled a feeble spark of hope in her soul.

"Despair not," a voice seemed to say; "even when thou canst see no outlet nor path that may lead to a happy goal. The heavens in serene and eternal purity still dwell behind the cloudy veil." A breath of the Almighty disperses the clouds, and above thee stands the blue unspotted vault with the blessed sun dispensing his reviving light over thy soul forever."

Feodorowna stepped to the window. The earth was arrayed in her gay spring garments; even in this northerly wilderness they imparted the graces of youth. The river sported on its dark blue path through the green fields; the crowns of the fir-trees were wafted to and fro by gentle zephyrs; the singing of the thrush trilled from the bushes; the lark caroled in the sky over the meadows; the swallows careered over the mirror of waters; the flocks hung upon the sharp declivities of the green hills which descended into the stream: whithersoever the eye turned all was pregnant with life, joy and goodness! The solemn tones of the bell summoned the people to early worship—for it was a day of festival! A sweet melancholy took possession of the sufferer. The dreams and images of her youth crowded with their wonted mystical power around her heart. Gently her tears began to flow.—Every pearly drop which escaped from her eyes brought relief to her oppressed breast. She breathed freer, and became insensibly filled with an increasingly trusting faith.

"God is near unto me!" she exclaimed, strengthened and joyful. "I feel His blessed power in my soul! Take courage then, Feodorowna; thou hast done according to His commandment; He will not leave thee or forsake thee!"

Thus strengthened and upheld by the power within, she resolved to go to the church and share in the devotions of the country-people.

On her return she found the castle in great commotion. The horse of a Cossack which she saw tied at the gate, informed her while yet at a distance that a messenger had arrived. It was not long before her father came to her in her chamber, and said:

"Thou knowest, my daughter, that I scrupulously fulfil my promises; but I come at this time to be in part released from them by thee. Thou hast desired three days in which to prepare thyself for the betrothal. I should have been glad to have allowed them, but a few minutes ago an express arrived, sent to

me by the General, with letters to myself and Prince Ochalskoy. The enemy has actually passed the Niemen and is rapidly advancing. This obliges us to depart for the army this very day. My departure is pressing—that of the Prince is necessary. In such circumstances thou wilt certainly consent to renounce the delay, as it is of the utmost importance to me to see a family affair settled and arranged, at least as far as may be possible, before I put my own life and your future husband's at the hazard of war."

Nothing but the pious and resigned frame of mind which Feodorowna had been enabled to attain, could have given her strength to meet her father's wishes. Still she felt an inward shudder that struck a chilling terror to her heart.

"If it must be so," she said, with difficulty, "I am ready to obey; only allow me one hour's time to collect myself, my father!"

"Well: in the meantime we will make our preparations for the journey," he answered. "Every minute is now of very great importance. I will send for thee in an hour."

So saying he left the apartment.

Feodorowna sank exhausted into a chair. She had possessed courage to renounce her rights, but the decisive moment drawing nigh again awoke the dreadful struggle in her breast.

"There is yet time to draw back—this heart may yet choose," she cried, wringing her hands. "One hour hence and all is over! No—it is already over with thee, for thou gavest an irrevocable promise. Fulfil, then, with fortitude the duty which the arm of the Almighty lays upon thee. He alone who crushes thy heart has power to heal it again. Put thy trust in Him!"

She rang her bell, and Jeanette appeared.

"Thou must dress me for my betrothal, my dear," she said, feebly. "In one hour I am to pronounce the decisive word."

She trembled violently. The girl suspected what were the feelings of her mistress. She wept in silence, while performing her little offices.

"What dress do you wish?" she asked, when Feodorowna was attired, excepting the last garment.

"The black one—no, the white one. I am in mourning for no one. I am the bleeding sacrifice myself. Oh, that I were a bride whom they adorned for the grave!"

Such was the outcry wrung from a heart torn by excruciating anguish. She sank exhausted in Jeanette's arms, and wept on her bosom in overwhelming sorrow.

She roused herself again, and directed a look of devotion toward the image of the Virgin, which just then was illumined by a ray of the sun

"One consolation, one hope, remains, however, indestructible in my breast," she said, in gentle accents. "Why then should I despair? When all earthly troubles are at an end, the hour must come when thou wilt bless thy child with imperishable happiness!"

From that moment she became calm. She looked beautiful in that white silkdress, like a lily with its head drooping. Supported by the arm of Jeanette she glided down into the hall. The parents, Ochalskoi, and Gregorius, were already there in waiting.

"I wish that Father Gregorius would bless my betrothal, even if it should not be customary," was Feodorowna's last request, uttered in a mild tone, yet so as to allow of no denial.

Gregorius spoke a few words. The rings were then exchanged, and the bride silently admitted the embrace and the kiss from him to whom she had now solemnly given herself away. But she turned pale in his arms, fetched a sigh and sunk insensible, in which state she had to be carried back to her chamber.

She was left to the care of her mother, for the horses were already impatiently stamping before the carriage in which Dolgorow and Ochalskoi immediately set out for the army.

CHAPTER XXIX.

On the twenty-second of June Rasinski with his regiment joined the main body of the army which the Emperor Napoleon commanded in person. An order received on the march had accelerated his progress. The other detachments, Regnard's regiment, the artillery and two squadrons of heavy cavalry could not advance so rapidly. The sun was sinking behind the blue forest which encircled the western horizon, when on ascending an eminence the French army first became visible. Dark masses of troops covered farther than the eye could reach the gentle hollow which girts the chain of hills skirting the banks of the Niemen, and bordering the great forest of Pilwisky. Rasinski, with Bernard and Louis, whom he employed as orderlies, were about a thousand steps in advance of the regiment.

"Holy God!" he exclaimed, "What a world in arms! Look, my friends, look there! Over a mile extends that line of closely-packed columns; and from that other side are other innumerable masses drawing near. What a stupendous mind that must be which can unite the strength of so many

thousands into one focus by his own creative will! You will find every dialect of Europe in this encampment. From the dwellers by the Ebro and by Vesuvius, the sons of the Alps and the Pyrenees, to the slavish hordes which inhabit our steppes, every city, every town and village has sent some of its sons hither. And all with glowing enthusiasm and implicit obedience follow the steps of this one man. They obey him and have faith in him, as if he were a god before whom men bow without comprehending! Look at that splendid train of artillery coming up that hill! I estimate its strength at four or five hundred field-pieces, and still it is not one-half of what Napoleon brings to hurl destruction into the midst of the hostile ranks."

Rasinski stopped his horse and looked attentively around.

"Here, in the direction of those three pines, lies Kowno; it will probably be fiercely defended by the Russians; there, at that point you will see the road from Konigsberg, which joins our road in the underwood before us. That small place below by the wood, is Pilwisky; that pointed steeple farther to the left belongs to the little town of Schirwindt. Observe the topography of this ground narrowly, my friends, for I may have to dispatch you this very night to both of these places, as I suppose the staff is quartered there."

While Rasinski was thus making his companions acquainted with the features of the neighborhood, his regiment had come up. He placed himself at its head and marched in regular order towards the encampments.

Before he had reached the first vidette, a general officer came galloping to meet him:

"I am ordered, Colonel," he said to Rasinski, "to point out to you the spot where you are to bivouac with your regiment for the night. Your arrival has been already announced. You will pitch your encampment on that hill over there, next to the Imperial Guard."

Rasinski immediately perceived the distinction conferred upon himself and his troops in this arrangement, and while offering his thanks for the information, expressed his satisfaction in lively terms.

The regiment, under the guidance of the general officer, now proceeded through the midst of the camp towards the spot designated for their bivouac. The most diversified scenes and objects were observed during this march. They came first to a long train of heavy artillery, and passed long drawn-up parks of ammunition wagons.

"These are the iron sinews of the monster," said Louis to Bernard as they rode by.

"Or rather his jaws, breathing fire and death," answered Bernard. "I have a strange feeling," he continued after a few

moments. "While entering these portals of the temple of War, I appear to myself so little and insignificant, I am so entirely stript of all self-sufficiency and sense of power to act, that I seem to myself a mere empty nutshell tossed about on the rolling ocean. Nevertheless, I shall find some capital work here for my sketch-book, for at every ten paces I see some characteristic before me, and I perceive that one needs only to ride through a military encampment to become another Philip Wouverman—if one has a pencil by him, and is not such an artist already beforehand."

They had now arrived at the first bivouac of the infantry, and could leisurely contemplate the several groups which had gathered around the camp-fires. In the distance was heard the half-intercepted sound of music, playing the Marseilloise Hymn. Immediately in the foreground were a dozen grenadiers extended around a large fire. A sapper, with a bushy beard, was industriously stirring their evening-meal in a camp-kettle. Every instant he was obliged to secure his long beard from the shooting flames; some young fellows close by made themselves merry at his expense, laughing at his dilemma. One with a bandaged head was lying asleep; his comrades had furnished him with a pair of prodigious pair of moustaches, traced out with charcoal. Two were performing a mock-light with their fists. The rest were sitting or lying about in a circle, looking lazily at the regiment passing by, without it seeming to attract special attention from those accustomed to such everyday events. They pointed the finger unceremoniously to any thing particular, and one fellow, when Bernard looked at him rather sharply, made up a face at him, at which the others set up a hearty laugh.

A few paces farther was another group lying about, listening very attentively to a musical genius who was performing on a flageolet the old romance: "Il pleut, il pleut, bergère." This favorite little ditty seemed to awaken the tender passion in a sergeant who was endeavoring to establish a conversation with a pretty sutler's girl behind the circle of his prostrate comrades, discoursing to her the most refined gallantries and chucking her under the chin with a certain paternal benignity, while his animated eyes betrayed rather a warmer inclination for the merry vixen. She kept nodding her head in time with the music, not paying any great regard to her gallant, only now and then repulsing his caressing hands.

"Love is at home every where," said Bernard, laughing; "her blossoms thrive even in the bivouac. The only eternally barren soil in which she will not flourish, is my

heart. For as yet I cannot exhibit any herbarium worth mentioning of the shoots of happy love."

Louis said nothing. He pursued his own gloomy thoughts, which had been strongly aroused by Bernard's words.

"Well, thou great lout!" cried Bernard, somewhat angrily, for a large heavy dragoon with his black horse-hair streamer hanging down from his helmet, mounted on a real plough-horse, rode right upon him, almost jerking him out of the saddle.

The fellow swallowed the "lout" without looking about him, and went on his way.

"A shameless cross-eared ass with his long legs thrown over that great awkward Norman beast," grumbled Bernard; "the fellow made a regular charge on me with his elephant."

"Those are the civilities of a camp," cried the laughing Jaromir, who had witnessed Bernard's mishap. "Thou wilt have to put up with such compliments until thou hast learned to reciprocate them."

"Pah!" answered Bernard, "in that particular I was born a master; I compare rudeness to certain echoes, which give back the sound not only quadrupled, but also much louder. In my case the old proverb: 'As you shout in the woods so it will shout to you back,' is not properly applicable, for I rejoice to see a raw bumpkin in a reflecting mirror where I can cut him out an ugly face."

They came to the bivouac of the cavalry, where the horses stood tied to long out-stretched lines. The smart stamping and neighing of the animals much enlivened the scene. One of them tore himself loose as the regiment was trotting by, wishing no doubt to join the brotherly ranks; a few dragoons were instantly after him to seize him, but he kicked furiously, capsized some camp-kettles with the ready-cooked suppers among the coals and ashes, and then made off with splendid bounces and caracols. A battalion of infantry lying near by set up an exulting laugh at this chase and tried to turn the animal back by their shouts. The Polish troopers also turned their heads towards the scene and laughed, when suddenly the loud word of command sounding from Rasinski: "Right dress! eyes right!" brought them back into the tight shackles of discipline.

It was to a French general that Rasinski paid this tribute of military deference. He bestrode a superb grey barb, whose trimmings and sweat-cloth were richly covered with gold-embroidery and stitchings. He answered the salute by slightly raising his hat, and as they defiled past he fixed his large scrutinizing eye on the men. The

athletic figure, the sombre fire working in his eye, the severe lines on his high forehead, in short, the *tout-ensemble* gave him that imposing presence, through which the soldiers often derive the most unbounded confidence in their leader. The men all along, too, stood reverently still, keeping themselves in strict disciplinarian order until he passed by.

Louis, on whom this figure had made quite an impression, said in a whisper to Boleslaus, who was riding at his side :

"Who is that general?"

"Marshal Davoust, the Prince of Eckmuhl," answered the latter with a grave and important mien, which indicated the respect which he also entertained for this celebrated soldier.

"Marshal Davoust!" repeated Louis to Bernard, and they both gazed intensely after him, until he was lost amidst the hubbub of the camp.

It had already begun to grow dark when the regiment reached the spot selected for their resting-place. The space which they were to occupy was distinctly marked out by the location itself; they were on the top of a hill, of which the crowning surface was perfectly smooth and barren, but bordered all around by bushes and underwood. A few hundred paces on one side, on the summit of a somewhat higher eminence, the Emperor's tent was pitched. From its centre pole floated the tri-color. Two of the "Old Guard" stood sentry at the door. Generals, officers, adjutants, orderlies, &c., came and went without intermission. Bernard looked steadily over towards the tent, in which at that moment the fate of Europe was deciding. But there was not much time allowed him to indulge in idle musings; the most agreeable portion of a soldier's labor was begun. Pickets were driven into the ground to portion off the temporary stables for the horses, by uncoiled foraging-lines being tied from one to the other; cooking places were marked out; some set about fetching wood and straw; others brought water. In a little while the merry fire of the bivouac blazed up; the men laid themselves down around it, entered into familiar chat with each other, and all became more cheerful. A good dram, which Rasinski caused to be distributed increased the general hilarity; even lively war-songs and soldiers' ditties sounded loudly, until the shades of night and the fatigues of the day invited the leaden wings of Morpheus over the breathing throng and changed the busy hum of the camp into solemn and thoughtful silence.

CHAPTER XXX.

IT was past midnight. Rasinski, wrapped up in a horse-cloak, lay by a larger fire than the others, under a wide-branching oak, asleep on a thin bed of straw, without the shelter of a hut or a tent. Boleslaus, Jarmir, Bernard, and other younger officers were lying around him on the ground.

An orderly stepped within the circle of the sleepers and asked Louis, whose watch it was by the fire, to show him Colonel Rasinski. Before he could answer, the latter started up. His slumbers hardly ever impeded this man's habitual alertness.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

The orderly gave him a sealed note, which Rasinski read by the light of the camp-fire.

"Very well, comrade; I will be punctual," he said, after having ascertained the contents.

The orderly departed. Rasinski called for his groom.

"Saddle my roan immediately," he said; "and you too, my friends," turning to Louis, and to Bernard, who had also awakened, "saddle your horses, for we must away instantly."

The young men sprang briskly up and hastened to their horses; for they had made it a rule to perform all the duties of the common soldier themselves, so as not to become squeamish and effeminate, or awaken the jealousy of others. They returned mounted in a few minutes. Rasinski was already on horseback. The rest of the officers, who had been lying around the fire, had awakened and risen.

"Most probably I shall be back before day-break," said Rasinski; "should, however, anything occur during my absence, you must address yourselves to Major Negolinski, as the senior officer of the regiment. He has already been notified to that effect. *Au revoir!*"

They left at a slow pace, and rode down the hill through the underwood, straight towards the Emperor's tent.

"What o'clock is it?" asked Rasinski.

"Half-past one," answered Bernard.

"Then we are almost too early. The Emperor wishes to reconnoitre the banks of the Niemen at the first dawn. I am commanded to join his suite, as I am well acquainted with the neighborhood. I recommend to you, my dear friends, to observe the utmost silence, for the Emperor hates every idle noise at those weighty moments when he deliberates on his gigantic schemes."

Both the young men were by these words wrought up to a state of intense expectation. For the first time they were to be witnesses of one of those momentous occasions when

the autocrat of Europe stretched forth the first threads of a bold and all-comprising woof. They were in a measure introduced into the workshop of the world's history ; they were approaching the fountain-head of events which, growing into a river and expanding into an ocean, was destined to carry the destiny of entire nations on its roaring and tumultuous waves.

Silently they rode along through night and forest, following the rigidly-silent guide between the gloomy camp-fires which glimmered to the right and left towards the tent of the Emperor. There they found a number of generals and other officers already assembled. A few minutes afterwards the Emperor issued from his tent and mounted his horse. The morning twilight already began to appear ; but the entire landscape was yet enveloped in a greyish veil, here and there made more impenetrable by the mist of the morning. In less than a quarter of an hour they had reached the wood-clad hills which line the course of the Niemen. The beautiful stream glided in pale lustre between the dusky banks, reflecting the expiring stars on its surface. On the other side lay the territory of Russia.

The Emperor halted on the hill, and for some time looked attentively on every side. He then spurred down the hill at a short gallop towards the river. As his horse trod on the wet sandy beach, he sank suddenly down by the fore-feet, fell, and threw his rider over his head.

For a moment every one was stunned by an accident which looked very much like a bad omen. Rasinski was so struck that he involuntarily exclaimed :

"A Roman would turn back!"

The deep silence which prevailed among all present, together with the stillness of the morning, which so easily transmits every sound, made these words audible to every one. Even the Emperor, who had quickly sprung to his feet, must have heard them, for he suddenly looked up, but said nothing. Calmly he remounted his horse, and continued his reconnoitring. He called Rasinski near him, and spoke often to him with great animation. He rode for a good hour along the river-side, then turned back, and galloped down to the bottom of a hill. By a gesture he summoned Marshal Berthier to his side, and while pointing with his hand towards the river, ordered him at the setting of the sun that day to throw bridges across at three separate points of the bank, which he distinctly indicated. After having done this, he returned to his tent, and Rasinski with his two companions repaired again to their bivouac.

The day crept along under many restless

anticipations. Napoleon's tent was taken down. He removed to a farm-house close by, which he left every now and then to take a ride through the encampment, and to animate the courage of the troops by his presence. As the sun rose higher, the atmosphere became exceedingly close and sultry. The suffocating heat of the long summer-day of the north threatened to stifle them all ; the sun shot down his fiery beams ; the troops kept themselves quietly in the camp ; the only business attended to was the care of horses and of arms ; but even that was very fatiguing in the burning heat. Every shady nook was eagerly sought out and occupied ; a cooling drink was the only luxury for which the men struggled. They imagined that they were carrying war into Egypt or Syria, rather than into frozen Russia.

At last the shadows grew longer and the sun began to decline. Towards eight o'clock a few detachments of pioneers departed for the river to construct the bridges. Expectation rose in proportion as the decisive moment drew nearer. Sleep would on that account alone have fled the eyelids of the eager soldiers.

Finally, at midnight, came the order to break up the camp. All were ordered to march in the utmost silence ; not a whisper was to be heard, not a spark of fire allowed to be seen.

Rasinski ordered his men to mount, and in close column they struck into a wide road which conducted to the river. In half an hour they came to a halt on a hill covered with grain wet with the dew. The hungry horses pulled up the young corn ; the men laid themselves down on the moist ground. Every one waited the breaking of day with impatience. Dark clouds of mist and fog delayed the hour considerably. At last a brisk wind sprang up, scattered the vapors, and unveiled the first tender purple streak of day streaming from out the depths of the land of the Russ. The eye could now range over the opposite shore, for it could be plainly seen from the hills on which they were standing. What a prospect suggestive of dark forebodings was there ! The eye roved over nothing but interminable forests and wide barren wastes. What ! were they come to conquer such a desert, inhospitable country, looking more like an immense prison-house than anything else, and with the sacrifice of so many thousand lives and rivers of blood ? A saddening dejection took possession of the minds of the warriors. On a sudden there sounded a loud trumpet-call ; the sun rose bloody but flashing over the black fir-tops of the forest, and the refreshing wafting of the morning-breeze filled the breast with joy and strength afresh. Every eye

was turned back to the point from which the war-like signal for marching had proceeded. It was from the Emperor's tent, which during the night had been pitched on the highest point of the river's bank. The tent shone prominently in the morning sun; the tri-colored banner, with its white, blue and red divisions, waved proudly in the breeze. A dazzling retinue of marshals and generals was stationed before the tent. The Emperor appeared, made a salute in military style, and vaulted on the back of his Arabian grey. As if moved by a single nod, the several columns broke away from the edge of the forest. In a few moments more every hill was covered with black waving masses, their glittering arms reflected by the glowing morning sun. The whole expanse moved in dazzling splendor; the heart expanded at the sight of these stupendous forces. The dark masses splitting into three broad streams, poured down through the sand-fields towards the three bridges which connected the two banks of the Niemen. In the mirror of these waters their numbers were multiplied. The Emperor set out and rode, accompanied by his staff, along the columns towards the middle bridge, and crossed over. He did not tread the hostile shore hesitating, doubtful or timorous; no: impetuous and fiery he crossed the bridge. On the other side he halted and let the troops pass by him. The glance of his grey, piercing eye enkindled an inextinguishable courage in the breasts of his soldiers. They greeted him with loud jubilee, which made the welkin ring, and which the silent shades of the deep desert forests seemed to hear with astonishment.

It was not till towards ten o'clock in the forenoon that Rasinski with his regiment passed the bridge. The Emperor looked upon him complacently, as the the Poles in their own language raised the cry of, "Long live the Emperor!" He then suddenly turned his horse about, and spurred with the arrow's speed down the sandy road, deep into the forest, so that he completely vanished out of sight of his troops. A vague feeling of uneasiness immediately seized upon every breast as they saw him who had brought them into these deserts of the North suddenly disappear. But he soon returned with the hanging bridle-rein. He looked uneasy and displeased; he seemed to be much offended because he did not find the enemy, which his heart, so eager for the contest, and so proud in anticipation of certain victory, had so ardently wished to see present.

Slowly the massy columns proceeded up the stream. They now heard a distant cannonade. Every one listened; again there was a roar, a rumbling noise, as of the distant crash of heavy artillery.

The utmost interest and anxiety was manifest on every countenance; the ranks closed up nearer together, and were more strictly put in order. Adjutants flew hither and thither. It was supposed that one of the side-divisions under the King of Westphalia or the Viceroy of Italy, had commenced an engagement. Then the dull roar sounded yet louder; but it was not that of a battle in the distance; it was the crashings of a rising and violent thunder-storm.

Black and sulphurous streaks crossed the heavy clouds which now advanced over the lower forest-clad hills; the river rolled along its dark and now agitated billows; the sun vanished from the firmament. On every side the dark curtains of the storm-spirit were drawn around the but now clear and pure sky; the thunder rolled and crashed all around; a stifling heat impeded the breathing of man and beast. Silent and slow the army marched onwards; nothing was heard but the mysterious grumblings of the thunder high above the crowns and deep into the recesses of the gloomy forest. Now the wind also arose in terrible power, sped furiously on its behest, and lashed the waves high and foaming between the two shores. Suddenly a livid flame shot through the heavens, setting as it were the entire horizon on fire, the Niemen reflecting back the burning Pandemonium in bloody red. The soldiers looked at each other with blanched faces. A deafening crash burst over their heads, the sky was rent in twain, and in hissing cataracts the rain rushed down upon them.

Such was the reception of the French on the soil of Russia!

CHAPTER XXXI.

SINCE Louis' absence the days had passed silently and drearily for mother and daughter. Mary bore her grief with great patience.—She complained not, she wept not, but sought her only consolation in a redoubled attention and care for her mother. A melancholy resignation had spread over her whole being, which gave to her even a new and more tender claim. She became better through her grief, as is generally the case with noble souls, and in the same degree as her own sufferings rose, so also did her compassion and attention increase for the sufferings of others. She consecrated to her mother all the thoughts of her soul as the sickness of her parent had taken a more dangerous turn from the anxiety and suspense which Louis' fate had thrown her into.

Strange as it may appear, this season of trials was a beneficial one for Mary—for the claims of duty, the attentive fostering her mother demanded, deprived her of the continual thinking of her own grief, which in this manner unobservedly lost its harshness and began to heal, so that in a short time she no more felt the hot pain of the wound itself, but only the beneficial feebleness which follows after violent bleeding. She was also forced to be constantly active, and this drew her much from corroding thought and solicitude. She was likewise assisted by Julie or Emma who occasionally came in from the country to give her company and assistance.

With astonishing quickness half the summer thus passed away, and the days already began to shorten perceptibly, when the mother thought herself again strong enough to visit the baths of Toplitz, whither she generally went every year. July was not yet over, when in the company of Mary she set out upon this journey.

On a clear morning, when the sky decked with its serene azure the earth, and the silvery net of dew lay in all its brilliancy over the fields, they left Dresden. The hours of noon they passed in a solitary inn on the roadside not far from Peterswalde. Meanwhile, the glowing atmosphere was pleasantly cooled by a thunder-storm which terminated in a fertile shower of rain. They continued their journey while the rain-drops were still slowly falling, although the clouds had dispersed and blue stripes looked through the thin foggy veil. The sun threw his glittering rays upon foliage and fields which shone with the brilliant decoration of the rain-drops. Thus they reached the Mollen-dorf mountain which they slowly ascended. With the afternoon sun they reached the top, and the little church and now the whole kingdom of Bohemia lay spread out at their feet. Although Mary had often before enjoyed this majestic view, still she was always agreeably surprised and charmed by the renewal. She left the carriage with her mother and walked down the road to the chapel in the shadow of which they sat down on a bench.

The Ertzgebirge was there with its green shadowy forest majestically spread out towards the south-east. In its deep valleys the clean houses of many villages, castles, and convents were seen. The lengthened forests often projected far into the country until interrupted by corn-fields and meadows. The high-road turned in many windings like a brilliant white stripe down the mountain, then struck the forest and intersected all the rich villages of the valley.

With pleasure Mary rested her eye upon this well-known landscape. With a dreamy

foreboding she looked upon the high blue colossal Milischauer, which, like a majestic pair of wings, rise in the heart of Bohemia, occupying the major part of the boundary of the eastern horizon. Further off, behind them, where the dispersing thunder-clouds were now going, was the immense country where were all those dearest to her upon earth. In deep veiled silence her heart also beat for the man whose manly noble appearance, whose noble spirit had gained her deepest respect, and whom she would, perhaps, have followed had not holier ties forced her to remain in her fatherland.

The steep descent obliged the carriage to stop several times; therefore the ladies could take a nearer foot-path which soon united with the highway. There they again stepped into the carriage, and now in a few hours reached their well-known place of sojourn. Here they were received by their old hosts, the farmer Holder and his wife, to whom they had already been announced, and Mary had the pleasure of being recognised by all the children of the house. In a few minutes they were settled in their little quiet garden-room, and felt themselves as comfortable as in their own house. The door of the sitting-room led immediately into the tolerably large garden, planted with fruit-trees and vegetables, and many pretty flowers, and furnishing a view of the Schlossberg with its beautiful ruins in the distance.

With excellent sense and feeling Mary understood how to make herself comfortable under all circumstances. It had become a second nature to her to make all around her look gaily and homelike. Without herself knowing why, a disorderly room often caused her the greatest displeasure, while on the contrary, the arranging and decorating a place which she had chosen for a sojourn gave her the greatest happiness. Not that she loved splendor or modern elegance, but all around her must have a friendly appearance.

The manner in which she placed a flower-pot, arranged her work in a room, spread the books which she intended to read first, her notes, her small drawings, all this created a comfort which every one was surprised at, when on entering he but cast a glance around the apartment. Even now it was her first occupation to open the trunks and decorate the room. But her fondness for order was not directed to outward splendor alone; it reached everywhere whither the eye of a strange observer could not reach. In her work-box, her bureau, the same neat and comfortable order might be found as in her room—yes, in her dress, in her hair even, the observer recognised the exercise of the same pains. Is it then astonishing that this harmo-

nious unison of places and things was also evident in her character. By female order and government she would have rendered even a dungeon a comfortable abode—how, then, should she not be able by a pious resignation; by a continual attention to every duty; by a ready recognition of everything pleasant which happened to her, to give a milder form to the sad combinations of a painful fate—by a firm resolute will to curb in a beneficial manner the violence of excited passions.

To this quality of the mind she added a mild gaiety which did not leave her even in periods as sad as that which she now lived in, and which communicated itself even to those around her. And, although it is hard to decide whether this power was gained by exercise of will, or by a natural happy temper, its blissful consequences exercised their influence also upon her. For, when through it she consoled those nearest and dearest to her, and especially her mother, she was herself happier, more hopeful, and although through a gloomy veil, she looked into the future with a freer and more confiding eye.

On the first evening the two ladies did not leave the house. Mary had ordered the tea-table to be brought into an arbor of the garden, which, overshadowed by wild vines and blooming panseys, afforded a cool seat and a beautiful view of the *Schlossberg*, the ruins of which shone gilded by the setting sun. Hither she invited the daughters of the host, Anne and Therese, the former a smart child of twelve years, who had already to thank Mary for many instructive things she had taught her. The other, a fair curly-haired creature of four years, whose funny gaiety made her to Mary as dear as a sister, even had she not been the godmother of the child. Anne thought herself honored by the permission to sit like a little lady with her knitting-work at the tea-table of the strangers. Therese amused her by her merry prattling, and *naïve* questions. Mary attended to both with the friendliness of an elder sister, and by agreeing with their childish representations engaged them to unrestrained mirth and delight.

With the next day the arrangements which had to be made for the convenience of both, began. An early rising was necessary, the other occupations had to be arranged accordingly, including the promenades which the physician had ordered. Mary accompanied her mother everywhere. During the bathing hour of the latter she used to take a promenade, generally in the castle-garden, with some acquaintances of Dresden, who had also come to visit the baths. Although living very retired, on these promenades Mary became gradually acquainted with the differ-

ent, sometimes odd figures, who congregate at the baths.

Finally it was known with whom each passed their time; those who left were missed—new arrivals immediately observed. The great freedom of conversation which exists at a bath causes one to fall easily into the connexion even of strangers. Young men also willingly joined the group in which Mary figured—for from a distance already her fine figure excited curiosity; her beautiful, but very modest dress, enticed them to step nearer to her; the mild expression of her features, the faithful glance of her blue eye, and especially her agreeable behavior—equally far from bashful retirement as from coquetry or arrogance—were so charming that old and young used all endeavors to enter into conversation with her.

Thus Mary's appearance at the morning promenades had gradually made her acquainted with the bathing world, and her presence at a small rural festival, which was to be arranged, was considered indispensable, if it should not want its finest decoration. It happened, therefore, on a certain morning, as she took her usual promenade with her friends near the fountain, that she was approached by a deputation of young men, at whose head was an Austrian captain of cavalry, Arnheim, who visited the bath for a wound of the arm, which he had received in the Battle of Wagram. With a modest bearing he addressed her thus:

"In the name of the bath company, I have to ask a great favor of you, Miss Rosen; but almost fear that you will refuse it."

"Certainly not!" said Mary, kindly. "If the compliance is within my power. Yet I do not know," she added, with an innocent smile, "what I could do which would be of any interest to the company."

"Until now you have been to us only the morning star which vanished with the increasing day," continued the captain, giving to his simile a light jocund turn. "We would ask you to shine for us once also as the evening star. For to-morrow we have arranged a small festival, and we should be sorry for it to lack the decoration your presence would give to it. May we dare to hope?"

At the same time the other young men united their prayers to those of the captain.

"I shall most willingly accept the invitation," said Mary, kindly, "if my mother permits it."

"Receive our most hearty thanks beforehand," replied the captain, with animation, and the other young men also expressed themselves thankfully and gaily.

"But where are you going to celebrate your festival?" asked Mary, after some moments.

"We have agreed," replied Arnheim, "to make a little excursion into the mountains and amuse ourselves with jokes and recreation, and if possible, by dancing in the open air as well as we can. We thought to drive to Aussig and thence in a boat go up the Elbe to the Schrukenstein. The rest we will leave to the favor of the weather."

"The choice of the entertainments could not be more in accordance with my inclinations," replied Mary.

The young men expressed their thanks and joy once more, and then retired to join the other promenaders. The family from Dresden, which Mary had joined, had also been invited to the festival, and the daughters immediately offered to take Mary with them if her mother should refuse to participate.

"I am sorry that is only too certain," said Mary; "for she cannot expose herself to the uncertainty of the weather. In spite of the warmth of the season, the chill of the stream and the evening air would be dangerous to her. I, therefore, willingly assent to be present at the festival under your protection, not that I am in a humor which promises me much enjoyment, but because I should be sorry to decline so kind an invitation."

While saying this, her mother came out of the bath. Mary immediately communicated to her what had happened, and received her most ready consent.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE clearest morning had dawned. It just struck nine o'clock when, in a light white summer-dress, decorated only with some bows of lilac ribbon, after having given to her mother a parting kiss, with gay steps Mary went through the garden to go through the back gate, the nearest way to the family of her friends who were to be her protectors. A carriage already stood before the door of the house, and the two young girls gaily hastened down the stairs to receive Mary.

"We shall have the finest weather," they said, after the first salutations were exchanged. "I shall be glad to see again the beautiful landscape which for a long time I have not visited," Mary responded.

During this conversation the parents stepped out, bade Mary welcome, and all went down the steps to enter the carriage. They soon left the town and were rolling between dewy bushes and hedges, meadows and corn-fields towards their rendezvous. It was thought a little surprising that no carriage

was yet seen on the road, as a great number of persons were expected to participate in the festival. On a small hill about a quarter of a mile from the town, all were relieved in the most agreeable manner. From the distance already it was seen that the way was crossed by a garland of flowers, which on coming nearer was discovered to be a beautiful arch of honor. This splendid flower-chain was suspended between the tops of two young beeches which stood by the road-side, and the bushes which surrounded them were decorated with wreaths of flowers, suspended from branch to branch, thereby forming a picture which, although not very symmetrical, had a wonderful charm lent to the fantastic disorder.

Joyfully the eyes of the young girls rested upon this dedication to the amusement of the day. Suddenly, as the carriage stood under the arch, two horsemen came galloping out of the bushes on either side, their hats decorated with leaves and flowers. These were followed by others who drew themselves up on either side of the way and gave a gay morning salute to the ladies. The guides rode up to the carriage and handed each of them a fragrant bunch of flowers. It was the captain who saluted Mary in this manner. He and another horseman then accompanied the carriage, riding on either side of it. They wished at the same time that the carriage might go as slow as possible, that those from the town might join them and then form a long and gay line.

"Then we are the first?" said Mary, while the carriage drove on and the captain rode at the side.

"Certainly," he replied. "We had desired the ladies to leave exactly at six o'clock, and we had arranged that we, who are on horseback, should receive the visitors here on the height. But see! our procession gains quite a respectable appearance! Only observe how carriage follows carriage to join in the line!"

Indeed three carriages were seen accompanied by their riders driving at intervals down the mountain whence they had just come. They quickly reached the first, and now drove just as slow. As the road, to the point where the arch was erected could always be kept in sight, it was a gay amusing sight to observe the arrival of the carriages which, through the colored shawls, dresses and hats of the ladies, and the flowers with which the riders were adorned, bore a lively contrast to the meadows and fields, and brought a brilliant array of colors into the calm picture of the landscape. The different points on which the eye rested came nearer and nearer, and soon formed into a rich colored chain, which moved through the fields. It turned accord-

ing to the windings of the road, rose with it upon every slight hill and most picturesquely sank again into the valley. It was charming to see it half disappearing behind the bushes, half shining through the green foliage of the branches, or to see it beaming against the steep wall of a rocky height. The whole procession passing under the serene sky, illumined by the morning sun, afforded a gay view, thereby tempering joyfully the present moment and most happily commencing the festival.

As there were now no more to join the line, quicker motion was gradually made; consequently a hill about half way between Toplitz and Aussig was soon reached, where breakfast was taken in the open air. The hill commanded an agreeable view of the vicinity. At its foot between thick bushes lay a village, through which a rivulet from the mountain bent its gay course; behind it the waving corn-fields were seen spreading over the hills. Around this beautiful foreground the high mountains drew their blue boundary wall, covered with the fogs of the morning. Behind the chosen resting place the mountains rose steeper, and were thickly covered with woods, which were drawn down to the left towards the town of Aussig, whence they fell off to the *Marienberg*. There also, by a line of dark forest-hills, the valley of the Elbe was discovered, although the stream itself could not be seen.

An old linden tree offered the best shade for the breakfast; some branches which lay around were quickly changed into rural seats; the cushions from the carriages were laid down on the turf, thus making Turkish seats for the ladies, which afforded a comfortable repose. Soon the whole company were settled, and all looked at each other with happy self-content. Every one praised the managers of the *fête*; these went busily around asking after the wishes and wants of all, and trying to get instructions from the ladies to know how this or the other thing might be arranged in a still more comfortable way. Meanwhile refreshments had been provided; in the hands of the men full glasses were seen; the spirit of the wine diffused its enlivening influence; merriment and jokes flew about everywhere; the tie of sociability already united those present, as if they had been long acquainted. Mary herself became gay in this gay company; but even in the most happy moments, her joy was of a quiet nature. With a charming smile on her lip, she enjoyed the scene of youthful hilarity. As she cast her eyes over the assembled crowd and looked at the different faces, of which, in this gay company, there were the serious and the comic, the charming and repulsive, she was most of all

struck by two ladies, who sat on cushions, leaning against the trunk of a tree, just opposite but somewhat far from her, and who seemed highly entertained by the sallies of an older and a younger man. She asked the Captain, who had thrown himself down on the turf at her side, who the two ladies were?

"Indeed, I do not know exactly myself; so much only I know, that they are strangers who arrived yesterday, and who are not yet on the bathing list. To the festival they were invited only this morning, when the many carriages which passed the hotel excited their attention. It chanced that one of the managers, who had remained to arrange something, and whose room is on the same corridor with theirs, met them as they were going to the fountain. They asked him what was going forward, and naturally, he could not but offer an invitation to the festival. As the carriage in which they were to drive to the bath stood before the door, they had only to change the direction to join our company. And I think we have lost nothing by it, for the mother shows traces of great beauty, and the daughter is indeed a charming creature. I have not had an opportunity to obtain an introduction, but their whole appearance announces them people of quality. I shall immediately go over and ask Baron Erlhofen himself for their names, so that you may have full information."

Before Mary could prevent him the Captain jumped up. Meanwhile she had time to examine closer the two strangers, and she must acknowledge that she had seldom before seen more noble figures, especially the elder, who possessed so imposing an appearance that the younger, although endowed with great beauty, sank in comparison with her. The black hair which covered the white forehead, gave, combined to the large dark eye, that noble melancholy to the face to which elder features so powerfully assume. There was no great resemblance between the two, yet a natural relation was so perceptible, that the slightest glance would have recognised a near connexion between them.

While Mary gave herself up to these impressions, the Captain returned, and said:

"I can now give you full information: the ladies are Poles, the elder is a Countess Johanna Micelska, the younger her foster-daughter, Lodoiska."

Mary was pleasantly surprised, for from the letters of her brother, these names were known to her, as well as that Johanna was Rasinski's sister. Yet she was in a painfully strange embarrassment, as she did not know if Rasinski had ever mentioned her; her relationship with Lonis could certainly

not have been communicated, as he had taken another name, yet it was possible that he had mentioned her, especially as all Mary's letters went under the address of Rasinski, and the answers of Louis and Bernard were always enclosed by him in a letter from himself, and sealed with his seal, when he sent them to Mary's mother. She longed to speak to the lady, to inquire after her brother and Bernard. Her pleasure in the amusements of the festival was gone ; all her thoughts were directed to this one point ; she was almost unable to turn her eye away from the Countess. The Captain commenced a conversation with her, and she needed all her strength to be enabled to give the necessary answers. Although the cultivated man spoke animatedly, although with brilliant pleasantry he described the social importance of such a festival, Mary had often with a slight confusion to observe, that though she had attentively looked at him, she had not heard a word of what he had said. She did not see how charming the groups were reposing, she did not hear how merry jokes resounded everywhere. It was therefore agreeable to her when, after half an hour, the company rose, and the Captain offered her his arm to conduct her back to the carriage. But here there was some confusion, for they did not all know the carriage in which they had come, and as most of them were hired carriages from Toplitz, few only could find them again. Thus they came to a friendly dispute, which was still more confusing through the jocular intermeddling of some young men. Even Mary met with a similar difficulty, as strange ladies had already taken possession of the carriage which she and her party believed themselves to have claim to. The confusion was great, but quite amusing, especially as the young men had bribed the coachmen to assert, that they could give no decision in the matter, as they had always turned their backs to their masters, and consequently could not know who had occupied the different vehicles. The quarrel soon became a general one ; for now, with true social disinterestedness, every one wished to be wrong and yield to the other, but this was certainly worse still, and no remedy for the evil. Finally Baron Erlhofen, one of the managers of the festival, a stout man of forty, and of some influence, asked in a loud voice to be heard. Universal silence was claimed that his speech might be listened to. He gaily jumped upon the trunk of a tree, waved his handkerchief to collect his auditors together, then began :

" Ladies and gentlemen ! I am neither a Cicero nor a Demosthenes, yet in my case both these great orators would have had to struggle with difficulties. History informs

us of the confusion at the building of the Babylonian Tower ; it speaks of the paths of the Labyrinth, of the indissoluble Gordian Knot, of the mixed seeds which Cinderella had to pick out ; but all this vanishes before the terrible confusion and blindness with which some demon intended to draw us into greater misfortune. The iron men who rose from the dragon's teeth which Jason sowed by Medea's order, did not slay each other with such fury for the stone which the Robber of the Golden Fleece threw among them, as we, my noble friends, were about to do in the struggle for the hired carriages of Toplitz. Trojans and Greeks did not fight with such passion for the faithless Helen, nor did Pallas and Aphrodite so wildly quarrel about the apple of Eris as our beauties about their places in that line of beautiful vehicles. All the wisdom of Minos or King Solomon would be unable to decide this dispute. The wise in this noble assemblage may therefore decide, whether I am not indeed a great man if I should point out the means to arrange all ; and whether in this case I have not deserved a laurel for my brow. My proposition is, that as in our nomad state a revolution is indispensable, we should immediately adopt a real Lycurgean law, and establish liberty and equality on a greater scale than ever seen in the French Republic, by cutting off all private possession, and declaring all those handsome carriages, with the horses, to be a national property. Our company must, therefore, be regarded as the cargo of a ship, which differs only in the point that this latter is driven by sails, as we by horses. To establish an equal division, most respected friends, it appears to me most advisable that we form a *polonaise*, and thus dancing, ship away by pairs. If this proposition, which is to save us from a terrible calamity, should meet with your approbation, ladies, inform me of it by giving your tender hand to the engaged cavalier, and willingly follow me, who has the intention to proceed as *dux gravis*, to which station the exalted capacity of my spirits has elevated me."

For this speech, which he delivered in the most serious tone, the Baron received universal applause. The law was received at once with acclamation. The Baron engaged the Countess Micelska ; every gentleman who had not come on horseback offered his hand to a lady, and even some who had been in the carriages, not having had their claims disputed, left them, and also subjected themselves to the rule of this modern Lycurgus. Erlhofen led the procession several times round the place, until all had joined ; he then took his way to the next carriage, of which he and the pair which followed him took possession. So everything was arranged in the

best and quickest manner, and even the most severe mothers and *gouvernantes* yielded for the time to the arrangements of chance, even when it brought very young couples together. Surprise also played its part to increase the pleasure, for only on entering a carriage was it known who would be the second couple. At the beginning of the dance, Mary said with a throbbing heart that she would enter the same carriage with the Countess, being asked by the Captain, who had given his horse into the charge of a friend. Although the state of her feelings caused her some embarrassment, yet now it must be decided whether she would remain unknown to the Countess, for it was certain that Erlhofen and the Captain, especially as both were managers of the festival, would introduce the ladies to each other. This was done as soon as they were in the carriage; scarcely had Erlhofen pronounced Mary's name, than the Countess immediately asked, if she was from Dresden, and whether she had known Colonel Rasinski, her brother.

When Mary replied to both questions in the affirmative, the Countess asked after her brother and her mother, and if they were both present?

"My mother," said Mary, much confused, "is in Toplitz; illness prevents her from being present at the festival; my brother is travelling at this moment, so that I am myself unable now to give information of where he is."

The Countess expressed the hope at least to make the acquaintance of her mother, as she intended to stay at Toplitz four weeks.

"Dresden," she remarked, after a short pause, "has been a happy place for my brother, although his sojourn there lasted only a short time. For he gained these two friends, who from inclination towards him entered his regiment, and stayed for some time in my house at Warsaw. You will know them—Count Lomond and Herr Von Soren?"

Mary sunk into a painful embarrassment. All deception, even the most innocent deviation from truth, was so foreign to her heart that she shrank from it, even in cases as pressing as the present; and then she knew not how far Bernard and Louis had asserted to be acquainted with her. Almost inaudibly and deeply blushing she replied:

"O, yes, I know them distantly."

But her confusion did not escape the eye of the Countess, who gave to it another meaning. She thought herself justified in suspecting from Mary's great agitation that her heart was more entangled in this connection than a young girl may betray. With a smile, which was suppressed as soon as it appeared, she dropped the conversation, and

immediately passed to other things. With the address of one used to the world, she immediately began to speak about the gay festival, of which she had so unexpectedly become a sharer. Mary, on the contrary, inquired after the daughter of the Countess, whom she thought Lodoiska to be.

"For her sake," she replied, "I visit the bath—less because her health requires the use of it, than to procure for her some distraction, which in our native city of Warsaw cannot be found, as it lies too near the present scene of war. Nothing, therefore, could be more agreeable to me than to be saluted immediately on my arrival in so friendly a manner. I have also observed that this omen, if we may call it one, has made a favorable impression on Lodoiska. She loves such things, and is altogether a dear dreamer. I am sorry that for several months already she has had so great an inclination for melancholy that I almost despair of ever reviving in her the merry enjoyments of life."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DURING this conversation, which drew the ties of mutual connexion still closer, the procession had approached its destination. Already the little town of Aussig was seen, as it lay picturesquely along the banks of the Elbe. The horsemen, who till now had accompanied the carriage, rode in advance, to announce the arrival of the ladies and prepare everything for their reception. The whole town became excited when this line of young cavaliers made its entry. The neat girls in their Bohemian bonnets looked with their brilliant black eyes at the noble gentlemen, and smiling half-bashfully, half-gaily, quickly drew back their handsome heads when a glance was cast up to them, or a salute, to which the young men in their merry impudence were very much inclined. The host of the inn was soon informed; in haste he and his people came running to receive the visitors and take charge of the horses.

"All is in the best order, gentlemen," said the host; "the whole house is at your service—the rooms are cleaned and decorated—for a good table I have taken care—in short, I hope the noble ladies and gentlemen will be satisfied with me."

"We will see," said Baron Heilborn; "we are the managers of the festival—we will look at everything. In ten minutes at the latest the carriages will arrive with the ladies, and then nothing must be wanting. Have

you flowers enough to strew over the stairs, and is the entrance bountifully decorated with wreaths?"

"I think so, your honor," replied the host; "and not only the entrance, but the dining-saloon also, as well as it was in our power."

During these words they ascended the steps and examined the upper part of the building, which had been prepared for the reception of the guests. Gorgeous rooms could certainly not be expected; for four roughly-white-washed walls, on which the low ceiling was almost painfully pressing, half-broken doors painted with a reddish brown color, small dim windows set in lead, and a floor from bad boards somewhat uneven, could not certainly form a brilliant palace; and with the exception of some stucco-work on the ceiling, there was nothing that could be called architectural about it. But the host had hung large wreaths of oak branches on the doors, between which also some flowers appeared; the taste displayed in the arrangement was certainly not the most happy—still it had a gay rustic aspect; green leaves and flowers always look pretty, even if they are not artistically arranged. The saloon was decorated in the same style as the doors; along the white walls the green full oak wreaths were arranged in charmingly-turned arches about a foot beneath the ceiling. On entering, the gentlemen looked around, and then gave the host a thundering "Bravo!" for a merry heart is satisfied with all that tries to accord with its humor.

The young men hurried down, ordered the stairs and hall of the house to be strewn with flowers, and then idly placed themselves at the door to await the arrival of the others.

In all the windows round, the inhabitants of the town were to be seen; a lot of children had assembled around the house. Although they were mostly poor and half-naked, still joy shone from all their eyes. The host wanted to chase them away, that the noble company, as he said, might not be molested; but Heilborn prevented it, saying:

"Leave the children to their amusement; they do not interrupt ours. If others are seen to be merry, then one's-self becomes more so; therefore let the children jump about, cry and laugh, and clap their hands as much as they please. We shall see who will be the gayest, they or we."

The first carriage now drove over the rugged pavement of the town; all heads turned towards the corner where the street from the city gate opens to the market. A shout burst from the children as the white horses which drew the first carriage emerged from the street.

"Let us imitate the children," exclaimed Heilborn. "Let us salute them."

With these words he drew his handkerchief from his pocket and waved it in the air. The others imitated his action, and the children redoubled their acclamations. The Countess, Mary, the Captain and Erlhofen were in the first carriage, which was immediately followed by the others. The young men hastened to the carriages to assist the ladies in alighting.

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"Panem et circenses!"

He then jumped down, and hastened through the door after the ladies, who had preceded him.

Carriage after carriage now drove up, and figures in beautiful summer attire jumped out and passed through the door of the inn. The abundantly-strewn flowers drew almost from every lip a thankful comment. Finally the last charming foot lightly stepped from the carriage. In the saloon and the adjoining rooms, Erlhofen, assisted by the Captain, Heilborn and the other managers, were occupied meanwhile in procuring seats for the ladies, and in assisting them to put away their shawls, cloaks, parasols, reticules and all those thousand trifles the ornaments of ladies.

When the first confusion had in some degree subsided, and order became restored, the first question put was, what shall be done now? Erlhofen showed some inclination to ascend again the oratorial pulpit, and deliver a Ciceronian speech, but the Captain interrupted him, saying:

"A state must be governed, and in critical moments even a republic must have a dictator. If we discuss and vote about everything, we shall probably lose so much time that, when the best of a thousand different projects has been chosen, we shall want leisure for its execution. I therefore propose that we elect a king and a queen, whom we will obey to-day. These can then, if necessary, nominate their ministers; in short, take the government of the whole upon their shoulders."

This proposal was carried by universal acclamation, and the election of a monarch commenced, the first choice being left to the ladies. Erlhofen was at once elected, with the liberty of choosing a queen, whom he should raise to the throne by his side. With a proud mien, the crowned-head stepped within the circle, casting kind, but inquiring

glances around upon the fairer portion of his subjects. Then with solemn steps he approached the Countess Micelska, bent a knee before her, and said :

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Loud applause greeted the royal couple, who immediately entered upon their duties by nominating a cabinet.

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All were completely satisfied with this arrangement of the newly-chosen royal pair, and all seemed inclined to pay strict obedience. The first order was, that a walk should be taken to the Marienberg, near the city, commanding a charming view of the valley of the Elbe, and that could be ascended without any great difficulty. During this promenade, other things were to be arranged. By couples they set out. It was a gay procession, which lightly and gaily moved, first through the streets of the town, between the gossiping inhabitants, and then over the soft grass and through the shadowy bushes. Shawls, ribbons and dresses waved in the breeze ; the light-colored parasols shone through the green hedges. Following the windings of the mountainous path, they already began to ascend the mountain, between the vines and hedges which cross it. A treble line was seen moving one over the other, until higher up, at a turn of the road, they disappeared in the dark coves which crown the summit. Erlhofen, with the Countess on his arm, walked at the head of his people ; from time to time he stopped, partly to repose, partly to point out the beautiful views in the valley. The summit was soon gained. It commanded a view, although not extensive, most charming, of the neighboring country. The streets of the town were seen, as if they stood upon a tower.

" From this point we can easily overlook our monarchy," said the Baron, pointing to the inn by the market ; " we can also count

our army, which, in the form of a fortress of carriages, is arranged there on the market-side of the town. The valley of the Elbe, the beauty of which is to charm us to-day, undoubtedly now belongs to us, and I cannot imagine what could be said against our governing the sun, which will to-day warm the air for us—the moon, to whom I have given a particular command to be ready to light us home."

" The most beautiful part of our dominion," said the Countess, looking graciously around, " seems to me the living part of it."

" Indeed !" exclaimed Erlhofen, " your majesty is right ! When I look upon our subjects here, I can almost assert that no monarch of Europe reigns over so civilized, patriotic and obedient a people. For although in our dominion we are wanting the many usual arrangements, we have the best grounds of excuse. We have no police, because we have no vagabonds ; a lawyer could not live among us, because no law-suits will occur where all are tranquil ; poor-houses we have none, because there are no beggars but such as might pray for a kiss, to which we trust that in time of need we might in this respect lend a generous ear."

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Holding such converse, the most charming spot had been selected, where in the shadow of the thicket soft moss afforded a pleasant place of repose. The king gave the law, that all his subjects should make themselves comfortable, and obediently they fulfilled his command.

" I think," began the monarch, " we should arrange our amusements partly after our powers, partly after the hints which nature itself will give us. In these calm hours of the forenoon, when the sun rises higher and higher, and the warmth increases every moment, who cannot while reposing enjoy the beautiful ? the afternoon only is suited for active amusements, when at every moment a cool breath of air fans us. Now conversation and jokes will be the most pleasant for us ; for then we shall have time to listen to the agreeable humming of the insects, to turn our eyes upwards to the top of the trees as they hardly move by the slight breeze, quietly whisper among each other, and let the sunbeams and the blue sky mutually

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" I think," began the monarch, " we should arrange our amusements partly after our powers, partly after the hints which nature itself will give us. In these calm hours of the forenoon, when the sun rises higher and higher, and the warmth increases every moment, who cannot while reposing enjoy the beautiful ? the afternoon only is suited for active amusements, when at every moment a cool breath of air fans us. Now conversation and jokes will be the most pleasant for us ; for then we shall have time to listen to the agreeable humming of the insects, to turn our eyes upwards to the top of the trees as they hardly move by the slight breeze, quietly whisper among each other, and let the sunbeams and the blue sky mutually

glance through their voluptuous verdure. A quiet, refreshing play I am agreeable to, but none of those wild games in which we run to lose our breath, which, especially for a majesty, would be unfit."

All were of his opinion, and at the request of the ladies the Countess proposed a game of forfeits. This created many jokes, for the king not only proposed, but even ordered many liberties in the redeeming of the forfeits. When this was ended, a general departure was ordered, to find a new place for settlement, as the sun began to burn inconveniently, and the thin foliage could no longer prevent his eyes from exercising their strength. The monarch sent his ministers as messengers on all sides to discover a pleasant retreat. After a few moments the Captain returned, and asserted to have found a place which had all the appearance of making a pleasant resting place. All followed him, and he conducted the company down the hill; then he turned into a foot-path which ran along the mountain, and soon entered the darkened forest, where tall bushes afforded the coolest shade. From the rock a clear fountain sprang out, which emerged into a basin formed by the water itself, and then overflowing its bank, gaily bounced into the valley. The declivity of the mountain formed the most comfortable seats; the roots of an old beech tree covered with moss served as an elevated seat, admirably suited for a throne for the royal couple. Still, in spite of the dark forest, the place commanded a beautiful view; for a high arch in the trees, formed by the foliage and branches, permitted the eye to see the brilliant mirror of the waters of the Elbe, over which the old castle Schreckenstein rose on its black rock. Opposite, the view opened into the valley, from which the swans upon the stream shone like spots of silver. The beauty of the place surprised the company so much that it was greeted with a universal shout. The monarch seated himself on the soft throne; the queen took her place at his side, the rest arranging themselves in a semi-circle on the declivity of the mountain by pairs on the turf.

"This place is too beautiful even for play," commenced the queen. "It is almost too sacred to be the scene of frivolous jokes. But it would be charming to listen to any story-teller or singer, who could give us information about the wonders of this valley. Have none of our subjects spoken to the spirit of this rock? Has the mountain-spirit or the charming nymph of the stream appeared to none of them? Has she addressed none of our knights, who in hunting lost himself in the mysterious darkness of the forest? Has she offered to none thirsting the refreshing

cup? Has she never loosened the helmet for a loved one, and invited him to repose his head in her lap? And has she told none of her castle deep in the bosom of the rocks or under the silvery coral of the waters? Has she sung to none sweet songs, accompanied by the rushing of the waves and trees to charm him into a sweet slumber? Has she introduced none into her palaces and permitted them to look at the dances of the nymphs and their sisters? Or there is, perhaps, a happy one among us whom she has drawn with her into the mysterious grotto, there in charming solitude to caress him? Alas! I fear the time of wonders is over—that there is hardly a poet left to tell us of those golden days when gods made free with mortals! If there is one among us who feels that the old dreams have not yet vanished—that the kind beings whom our ancestors knew are still wandering around, although frightened into the deepest seclusion by the unholy noise and commotion of the world, let him stand forth!"

All remained silent, but all smiled at the pleasant manner in which the Countess had thrown a bait for a story. Finally a young man of about twenty, who, by his modest, almost girl-like, behavior, as well as by his handsome, fair, curled head, and the tender blush and roundness of his cheeks had already been remarked by all, rose and said:

"I am, perhaps, the youngest of the whole company, and I have no claim upon their attention; yet I have been bred up among these mountains, and I know many a beautiful legend which lives among the people here."

"O, tell, quickly, tell!" cried many voices, interrupting this introduction, which had been uttered in a blushing and bashful manner. But the Countess rose and said:

"It is kind of you to be so obedient to the commands of your sovereign. Let the narrator occupy a place where he can be seen and heard by all. Take your seat, sir, on my throne, so long as your story lasts."

The Countess had not finished speaking when Erlhofen jumped up and exclaimed:

"May heaven forbid my ever seeing my queen derived of her throne! But the poets and the singers are the real kings—for they govern hearts, especially those of the ladies. He may, therefore, occupy my throne and sit at the side of the queen, whose charming presence will doubtless inspire him."

All applauded this resolution, and the youth, Berno, took his seat at the side of the Countess. After a short pause he told a tale which had been composed by himself about the traditions of these mountains. It was the story of one of the favorites of the in-

habitants of the mountains and streams, who gains the love of a virgin, who lives in the depths of the mountain-lake, and swears to her eternal fidelity. But he has to submit to hard trials,—mysterious powers begirt him everywhere. The object of his heart arms him with a secret, wonderful talisman against the influence of the spells, yet he is blinded, because faithless, and suddenly sees himself abandoned by all the deceiving images of his fancy and thrown into the deepest misery. Despairing, he ends his life by throwing himself into the lake, at the bottom of which is the crystal palace of his love. Since that time its blue waves have become dim and gloomy, and even the clearest sky looks into the depths of its waters only as in a black mirror.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WHEN Berno had finished his story all minds were in a certain, fearful excitement. His representation had been animated, and his auditors in so close proximity to the scene that they looked upon the landscape with the same feelings with which we regard the spot which history informs us was once the scene of a great and decisive event.

"Is there really such a lake near here?"

With this question the Countess first interrupted the universal silence.

"It is but little known," replied Berno, "and to tell the truth, hardly worth visiting if it were not for the sake of the tradition. But as it often happens, our forefathers, spite of their romantic talent for poetry, do not seem to have developed so much taste for natural beauties regarding the spots to which they attached their traditions as might have been expected from such poetic minds."

"This accusation appears to me not altogether just," observed Mary; "for we find many traces indicating that our fathers have very clearly felt the beautiful, imposing, and solemn in nature. It is proved by the names of the prominent mountain-rocks and precipices. Secondly, the tradition certainly was not entirely voluntary, and if even it was partly created by the place itself, yet it must have demanded an event, an action, so that it might be regarded as a child of the action and place combined. And how often do we find that the scene of an action stands in the closest connexion with the action itself?"

"You are certainly in the right," replied Berno, with a slight blush. "Yet we often find the finest traditions located upon places

of little importance. My tale is one of these, and serves for an example."

"Be this as it may," said the Countess, "your story has furnished us an agreeable hour. I, as monarch, have to fulfil the duty of rewarding the poet of this, my court of love, and this shall be done in a truly royal manner. The story has grown out of the pure soil of nature, it shall be rewarded by the gifts which she produces. It commences in an affecting manner, exhibiting fidelity as the real soul of love, and thereby especially protecting our sex, which has to suffer so much from the faithlessness of men. It is therefore but justice that female hands should reward our loving subject. It is my command, therefore, that all the young ladies of my court go and pick the finest flowers of the field. On their return we will ourselves choose three of them to wind a wreath of these flowers, and then chance shall decide which of the three is to crown the poet and be his companion as long as our sovereignty lasts."

Universal applause was the response to this order. The gentlemen gaily clapped their hands and praised aloud the Queen, who knew so well how to govern her court of Love. With comic pathos Erlhofen seized a branch as sceptre, and exclaimed :

"Hark ye! my people! I hereby give my solemn sanction to the decision of my royal consort. Go, therefore, ye virgins and do not return until you have deprived the dominions of our empire of their finest decorations."

The young ladies now jumped up and ran into the green forest to commence picking flowers. Many of the men were inclined to accompany them, but this the Queen firmly forbade. Ere long the ladies had filled their baskets and returned to the company. They poured out their supply on the turf, and the queen looked at them with scrutinizing pleasure.

"Very well," she said. "Now I shall nominate those who are to wind the wreath."

Her choice fell upon Mary, Lodoiska, and Louisa, the pretty daughter of a respectable man of Toplitz. The girls sat down and began their work; the garland soon became filled and rounded under their soft fingers. When it was finished the Countess took three flowers, a wild rose, a daisy, and a violet, which, although late in the year, had been found on a shadowy place. The eyes of the poet were tied—the Countess gave a flower to each of the three young ladies, and desired Berno to make a choice. He named the rose, and Lodoiska became his companion. She was to press the full, fresh, fragrant wreath upon Berno's fair curling head.—Bashfully, and with a slight blush, she took

it. Berno bent his knee before her, and with beating heart received the recompense for his poetical talent.

"May this wreath give you as much pleasure," said Lodoiska, "as your beautiful story has caused in our hearts."

At these words, the blush again vanished from her cheek; and only that slight smile remained which gave so captivating a charm to her handsome features. Berno rose, took her hand, kissed it with fervor, and replied in the words of the poet :

"Let my reward not be your punishment!" He now gave her his arm and conducted her to a seat, where he sat down at her side.

Meanwhile the sun had risen nearly to the meridian. It was time to return if the dinner was not to be spoiled. King Erlhofen proclaimed this to be the most important business of his empire, and vowed that he who should exercise disobedience or treason on this point, should be severely punished for his offence. Obediently his consort took his arm and the procession moved downwards.

The dinner was ready ; in a rough-and-tumble manner, all took their seats to partake of it. Erlhofen and the Countess presided, as was their due, and the Monarch gave many different speeches upon the merits of good eating and drinking.

The warmth in the saloon, although the windows were open, soon became so oppressive, that the younger part of the company began to long for a change. It was with joy, therefore, that Heilborn and Arnhem were received, when they came in and announced that two boats were in readiness on the Elbe to take the company to the Schreckenstein. Erlhofen would willingly have remained at the table some time longer, especially as the supply of champagne was not yet near exhausted, but the young people were not to be kept back ; even the royal authority itself had no power over them. All broke up gaily, the couples forming as before, and the *cortege* set out on the way to the banks of the river.

The boats, with their gaily waving streamers, made so beautiful an appearance, that the best hope was entertained for the pleasantest of trips. A fine band of wind-instruments—Bohemian mountaineers—was heard from a boat which had been hired specially for the occasion. The boatmen in handsome dresses, with ribbons and flowers on their boats, greeted the company with a vociferous hurrah! Planks were thrown to the boats, over which the ladies tripped gracefully, the couples took their seats on the benches, the music struck up a gay quickstep, and under the joyful acclamations of the people who had collected on the shore, they pushed off up the stream.

Now, only, after having gained the middle of the river, one could look deep into the majestic forest valley, out of which the Elbe flows. Behind, the town gaily rose on the green shore, reflecting itself in the mirror of the waves ; in front, rose dark wood-clad mountains, hanging steep down into the stream, and casting their dark image upon the mirror of the deep. To the left, the view was bounded by the black rock of the Schreckenstein, which rising horizontally from its companions, stretches its top far out over the waves, so that the walls and ruins of the towers at its summit seem to be hanging in the skies. A fresh breeze which blew out of the valley, made the oars unnecessary ; the sails could now be set. Swiftly and smooth the banks passed before the eyes of the tourists, showing to them the charms of a continually changing picture. Now they passed under a high mountain, which cast its broad shadow across the stream, now the boats danced on the silvery waves, shining in the rays of the sun, while the banks lay in the green twilight of the forest, casting their image into the gaily-playing waters. Now the bed of the stream became narrower ; foaming and roaring it rushed over and between rocks ; now again it became broader, transformed into a quiet lake in the depth of which the clouds calmly passed. In an hour the destination, the Schreckenstein and its rocky castle, were reached.

"I thought the rock was higher," said Lodoiska to Berno, while standing on the bank, she looked up to the spires of the towers. "It appeared from afar much more majestic. And it is the first steep rock I have ever seen, for in Poland the country is nearly all level—it has only forests and bushes."

"Only let us ascend to the top," replied Berno, "then you will soon find that the rock is not so very trifling ; certainly it looks so now, contrasted with the mountains which rise much higher behind."

Lodoiska still kept her thoughtful gaze upon the proudly overhanging top.

"Mountainous countries are beautiful," she said after a short pause. "Poland has also mountains, but only in the southern part where the Carpathians rise. I have never been there."

While this couple thus conversed, part of the company were already ascending the rock. Berno therefore offered his arm to his charming companion and conducted her up the steep path. When they had almost reached the summit Lodoiska wanted to turn round and enjoy the view, but Berno prayed her not to do so.

"Let me have the pleasure of giving you the surprise from the finest view of the whole scene. I would ask you to close your eyes.

altogether, if the way were not so rugged. The ground is too rough, there are too many stones laying in the way, and the path often turns too abruptly to permit walking with closed eyes. Keep your eyes only on the path before you, do not look either to the right or left, then you will soon be richly rewarded."

Lodoiska kindly promised this, and trusted entirely to Berno, who had now taken her hand.

In a short time the summit was reached, when Berno led Lodoiska through the ruins to a corner tower, which is approached by ascending a few decayed steps, and then leads to a small open space with large bow-windows, where the ground is seen under the feet and one seems to fly over the mirror of the Elbe. Before entering, Lodoiska, adopting Berno's advice, had closed her eyes, and by him she was now brought to the main window.

"Now," said Berno, "open your eyes! It is now time to look around."

"Gracious God!" exclaimed Lodoiska, stepping back with affright as she caught sight of the horrible abyss underneath her. But in one moment she had recovered herself, and although trembling still, she again went up to the window and looked down, without even claiming Berno's hand. "What fearful fascination!" she said in a suppressed voice. "How charmingly are the beautiful and dreadful mingled here!"

"Well," asked Berno, "is the rock high? Does it deserve the name of Schreckenstein?"

"It does, it does! O, how charming!" exclaimed Lodoiska, whose fear now gradually melted into astonishment. "How small our boats look in the gulf below! Even the garden of the castle-ward, right under us, looks only like a tiny patch. Only look at the swallows, they fly now as much below us as they generally fly above us."

"But the birds of prey are still high over our heads," observed Berno, pointing at a hawk flying across the valley, waving majestically its broad wings.

Lodoiska raised her eye. The bird seemed to rest almost motionless on its outspread wings. Suddenly, with the swiftness of an arrow, he shot down upon a herd of pigeons, flying far below him. The frightened birds quickly dispersed; with high-beating wings the hawk followed one of them. They flew towards the tower; but almost at the same moment that the pigeon had reached the safe retreat, the enemy had reached it and seized the frightened bird with its cruel claws immediately before Lodoiska's eyes. She saw some feathers fly and heard the fearful cry of the pigeon. In the flight, the hawk passed

so near the tower, that its grey broad wings touched the stones, but then, frightened at the sight of the people, without leaving his prey, mounted again high into the air.

The women—for Mary, the Countess, and some other ladies of the company had meanwhile also entered the tower—looked on this scene with suspense and compassion—compassion for the frightened bird, whom no one could help, and the fear allied to suspense from the wild, hoarsely-crying bird of prey. Lodoiska looked strangely pale and trembled violently. With her face turned away, she stepped back, and when her eye fell upon the Countess, threw herself on her breast, ejaculating a few words in the Polish tongue. Her protectress answered in the same language, but with a kind, consoling expression. Then she turned to the others and said, as if to seek an apology for a slight breach of etiquette:

"She has lately dreamt of something like this."

"Yes, it was a dream, a very sad dream," murmured Lodoiska, with a painful smile, "but I shall not think of it more."

CHAPTER XXXV.

To expunge the little untoward circumstance just related from the memory, Berno proposed a resort to the games of the country. The different entertainments were commenced,—shooting with cross-bows, throwing the rings, and playing of shuttle-cock, in which latter Lodoiska appeared unsurpassingly graceful. The sun had already sunk towards the mountains, and his rays had already received that slight red color, through which in the late afternoon hours the landscape receive such a warm illumination.

Not without cause was it feared that the sudden chill which springs up at sundown in mountainous countries would be felt by the party. The wish to return was therefore generally expressed, although with regret, for the sweetest part of the day was now passing before them. Still Arnhem urged that nothing would be more charming than the time when the purple of evening unites to the silvery light of the moon, to ride down the waves of the stream without moving the oars. Several new voices pronounced against a sudden departure, and finally it was decided to divide the company. Whoever feared the chill of the evening, was to go back in the first boat, the others to follow an hour afterwards; yet all were agreed that the supper should be taken together. After

this friendly settlement of opinions, the majority of the company took their way down the mountain; the others to which belonged the Royal couple, Mary, Lodoiska; the Captain and Berno, resolved at the instance of the latter to climb higher up, whence the surprising beauty of the valley of the Elbe was best to be seen.

The way up this ascent possessed extraordinary charms; hidden, as if secretly winding its course through the forest, it gradually rose higher and higher to the top. Between the rustling foliage peeped the brilliant sky; below, lay the silvery stream. Through the larger spaces among the trees, the aspect of the valley was entrancing, changing as it did at every turn of the road. Gradually all became still and secluded, the path became almost lost in the high grass, the soft foliage disappeared, and the darker shadows of a pine forest received our wanderers. Now really was the wilderness of the mountains reached. No longer was there a path, but softly one trod the carpet of moss spread over the ground. The air was filled with the balsamic fragrance of herbs. Berries were here in abundance, the dark red fruit shining brilliantly from under its cover of leaves. High solitary bushes of fern rose at the sides of the granite blocks from under which living springs spurted their tiny streams. A solemn waving and rustling passed through the tops of the pines. In fine, *Nature* here looked upon *Man* with her simple, majestic features.

Berno, who was intimately acquainted with the country, turned with security upon a course different to the one they had followed till now, to reach a high rock lying in the middle of an open plain of grass. This mass of rock looked like an immense sarcophagus, the upper corner projecting daringly over the plain. On the extreme summit a young pine had twisted its tough roots round the stone.

Our wanderers thought they were entirely alone on the height, when, to their astonishment, a white greyhound came running to them, first barking at them from the distance, but then confidentially approaching and returning Lodoiska's caresses by gaily jumping up and coaxingly pressing his head into her lap.

Gaily running before them, the fleet animal disappeared behind the rock.

"Probably some huntsman," said Berno, "for there is rich booty here for lovers of the chase."

The party approached the rock. On its other side they discovered, as Berno had justly suspected, two gentlemen in sporting-dress, both fast asleep.

"They must be visitors to the bath," said

Berno, in a low tone, "for yesterday I saw them in Toplitz. They probably put up at the *Golden Lion*, for after the morning promenade they entered there, and although I stayed about over an hour, I did not see them come out again."

All at once a shot was heard. The hound barked aloud rousing the sportsmen out of their sleep. They seemed astonished at finding a number of ladies and gentlemen near them. But they quickly jumped up, saluted the party, and at the same time excused themselves for the position in which they had been found. They were Frenchmen. Being fond of the chase, they had accepted the invitation of a Bohemian noble, whose acquaintance they had made on the journey from Prague to Toplitz, to spend a few days on his property; but they had lost him during the day, and were now reposing after some hours' hard exercise. The shot just heard must have been fired by their friend, for soon afterwards a beautiful pointer made his appearance. A long time did not elapse before the gentleman was himself seen breaking out from among the trees. This was Baron Sidlayek, a rich proprietor of the vicinity, well-known by Erlhofen, Arnheim and Berno. Salutes were exchanged with that heartiness which is created by an unexpected meeting, and the Baron asked permission to join the company with his two friends, whom he introduced as Messieurs de St. Luces and Beaucaire. Accidentally Mary had stood at some distance, and had not heard the names of these gentlemen; otherwise she would certainly have been much frightened, for she knew, through Rainski, how closely they were connected with the fate of her brother.

After resting sufficiently, and drinking in the beauties of Nature around them, they turned their steps towards the castle. With true French gallantry, the two strangers approached the ladies, and were soon as well-known as the oldest friends. The path at times being so contracted as to allow of descent only by pairs, the elder of the strangers, St. Luces, held the Captain a little back, and with the usual social curiosity asked him the names and rank of those present. Beaucaire also approached to listen. The names Erlhofen, Berno, even those of the Countess and Lodoiska, seemed indifferent to them; but when Arnheim mentioned Mary's name, the oldest of the strangers interrupted him.

"How? Rosen? from Dresden? Did you hear, Beaucaire?"

"Certainly," replied the latter, with a mien, the strange expression of which struck the Captain.

"Perhaps you know the lady already, gentlemen?" said Arnheim.

"Slightly," replied St. Luces. "I have seen her several times at the theatre in Dresden, where I stayed for some months, and as her charming appearance pleased me, I inquired for her name. That is our whole acquaintance."

These words amounted to nothing, for during their utterance the speaker threw such significant glances at Beaucaire, that the Captain felt convinced that the remembrance of some particular occurrence must have thus excited his curiosity. We may as well say, too, that whether he knew it or not, Arnheim had felt a lively sentiment towards Mary, a feeling not likely to be allayed by the particular interest shown by another, who, for what he knew, might prove a rival.

"Tell me," added the Frenchman, "is this young lady alone, or with her relations?"

"As far as I know," replied Arnheim, "only with her mother, who is kept at home on account of ill health."

"Then her brother is not here with them?"

"Her brother? I know nothing of him; still it is not impossible, for it is only these few days I have had the honor of being acquainted with the young lady. I cannot give you any information about her family connexions."

"Still the brother may be expected?" said St. Luces, clinging to the thought with an eagerness which proved his interest in the matter.

"The lady herself will be able to give you the best information," replied the Captain, to whom the continual interchanging of looks between the two strangers became more disagreeable.

But they asked no more questions, and Arnheim disengaged himself from them, which was less difficult, as both had halted a little, and were now seemingly engaged in a low conversation. Therefore he now tried to approach Mary's side. His desire was to tell her that she was known to the two strangers, and learn from her what kind of acquaintance that was about which she seemed not to care in the least. At a turn of the road he succeeded in cutting off those going before him and reaching Mary's side.

"You are the only one in the company," he said to Mary, after the first compliment, "who is not a stranger to the two gentlemen. They claim to have already obtained that good fortune in Dresden."

"Know me?" replied Mary, quickly.—"They seem to be French officers, but I never was acquainted with them."

"Perhaps not intimately," replied Arnheim; "yet your name was known to the

older gentleman; he asserts he has seen you repeatedly at the theatre."

"Impossible!" replied Mary. "For more than a year I have not visited the theatre, and never when a French garrison was quartered at Dresden."

Her answer was so prompt that Arnheim feared he had given her offence; indeed Mary did feel hurt, for with her devotion to her country, and her firmly-rooted hatred against its enemies, she would almost have regarded it as a crime to have manifested that respect for French officers which was due to those of her own fatherland.

"I assure you," said Arnheim, "that I only repeat what those gentlemen have just told me themselves."

"I most willingly believe it," replied Mary, in a milder tone, as she feared to have offended Arnheim; "but you know there is something in these Frenchmen, which constrains them to act without principle, even when a lady's reputation is at stake. It is possible that these gentlemen know me, from having seen me in the street or on the promenade; yet I can assure you that this acquaintance exists only on their side."

Arnheim, to whom it was agreeable to find his suspicions confirmed, broke off a conversation evidently distasteful to Mary. The subject was mentioned no more.

The Schreckenstein was once more reached. Here again they stopped for a short time, and just when the setting sun overcast the clear sky with a rosy tint, and the pale, full moon rose out of the dusky horizon, they entered the boat, to float down the stream towards the town.

The company gave themselves up to the enjoyment of the pure silent evening. The expected chill had not come—a pleasant air only curled the waves. The tops of the mountains appeared melted in the purple twilight, blended with the silver moonlight. The mirror of the Elbe gave back the shores in their boldest lines. A cool, refreshing fragrance rose from the waters. All sat silent, without speaking, in the blissful quiet state which wakens all the poetry of the heart. Suddenly the silvery sounds of a guitar were heard.

All listened. In every breeze rose the swelling tide of feeling, which the moving bark and the song of the gondolier creates within us. It was as though the stream and its beetling banks had suddenly passed under an Italian sky, as if it were the waves of the Brenta or Po on which they were floating.

The performer proved to be the handsome, fair Berno, who touched the strings to sing a ballad he had composed from a tradition of the Schreckenstein. The boatmen sat listening directing their eyes to the singer, pleased

at the surprise. The other listeners signalized each other to preserve silence. Nothing but the low rushing of the waves at the keel was heard. The moon cast her rays on Berno's face. Like an inspired *improvisor*, he cast his large blue eye up to the light and with a well-sounding voice sang the verses of the tradition, the burden of which told how a tyrannical father maliciously pushed into the abyss the lover of his daughter, when during the night he climbed up the steep rock. In her grief the young girl also cast herself into the stream, and the eternally floating waters form the grave of the loving couple. Berno sang with a mild agreeable voice and lent to his ditty really deep-felt expression.

The song concluded, all were silent. Even St. Luces and Beaucaire had enough of sociable tact not to speak, although they were curious to know the aim of the song, the words of which they had not understood.

Shortly the increasing life on shore, together with several boats with people from the town, interrupted the pleasant calmness which till now had reigned over the landscape. Gradually the boats neared the shore and arrived at the landing place. Part of the company who had preceded them were assembled there and hailed them with friendly salutes. In merry disorder they returned to the inn, where the saloon, brilliantly lighted with tapers, received the company. The table was bountifully supplied with fruit, cold viands, and wine.

Finally, about midnight they must separate and return home. Erlhofen could not let this occasion pass without delivering an appropriate address. He rose from his seat, filled his glass, and said :

"After a short, but, I hope, more honorable reign than ever monarch enjoyed, I come like the great Emperor Charles to lay down my sceptre. No revolution has overthrown me, nor has the hand of death overtaken me, but of my own will and pleasure does my sovereignty cease. The only painful chance to which the resignation of your sovereign leaves you is a fall in the rugged road to Toplitz. Go, then, my subjects! farewell!"

With these words the magnanimous monarch emptied his glass—offered his arm to his queen and conducted her to the carriage. All followed in pairs as before, and rolled one after the other away in the beautiful moonlight.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE morning had dawned when Mary silently stepped through the back door, the key of which she had secured, that she might be able to reach her bed-room without disturbing any one. She was surprised at seeing a lamp still burning in her mother's room. Cautiously stepping near, she looked through the vine-covered windows. A bright lamp was burning there; the light threw a dark shadow over the bed, and upon an arm-chair near it; here sat a female figure whose features Mary could not distinguish. A violent trembling seized her at this sight; she felt it even in her tottering knees, which rendered it almost impossible for her to keep on her feet.

Had her mother suddenly fallen sick again? Had any other misfortune happened?—Alarmed at these thoughts she finally gained her room and with fear opened the door which led into her mother's chamber. As she entered, the hostess awoke from the light slumber which she had fallen into—for it was she who had been sitting by the bedside. She immediately recognised Mary. With a sign of the finger she bade her be silent, and then pointed to the slumbering sick mother. In painful expectation Mary stopped at the door. On her tiptoes, Mrs. Holder got up, and they both stepped into the adjoining room.

"For heaven's sake, what is the matter?" Mary exclaimed with a violently heaving breast.

"Do not be so much alarmed, dearest lady," replied the hostess, endeavoring to calm her. "The accident will not have any bad consequences. This morning your mother and myself were on the promenade, together with many of the bathing guests, when we suddenly heard shouts of 'Mad dog! mad dog!' All ran to seek refuge in the houses. We also fled to get out of the way. Looking behind us, we saw the furious animal running in the same direction we had taken. Fear gave wings to our feet, and we soon reached the hill, where, you know, the large chestnut trees stand. The same moment the dog ran past us into the town, where he was killed. But the excitement and the fear had deprived us of breath, and your mother suffered a serious shock. This is the cause of her illness."

Mary trembled and changed color while listening to these words. Now she breathed lighter, and said with firmness:

"Tell me all, dear Mrs. Holder—yes, all. I must and will know it, if I am to be the attendant of my mother. Has the physician been here? What did he order?"

"We sent immediately for him. When

he learned she had been throwing up blood, he said she must be kept strictly quiet."

"Hæmorrhage!" cried Mary, overwhelmed with the fearful import of the word. "Almighty God! this, too, and you sent not for me!"

It proved too much for her. The whole strength and resolution of her soul were crushed and benumbed by this unexpected blow. Convinced of the real nature of her mother's sickness, the most gloomy forebodings rose in her breast. She permitted Mrs. Holder to lead her to a seat, upon which she sank down exhausted.

"Do not be alarmed," said the hostess, in a consoling voice. "The physician has given us the best hopes. He merely ordered quietness, that there might not be a relapse. Therefore lie quietly down to sleep, and I will watch by the bed of your mother. She is aware of my being with her, and she might perhaps be alarmed were she suddenly to see that you had undertaken the care of her. For she desired that you might not be told anything on your return, as to-morrow all would be right again, and you not plunged into useless sorrow and fear. Yet I have not dared to take this wholly upon myself; but now you must quietly remain in your room and sleep, otherwise you may fall sick yourself. You must be much exhausted after the long ride."

Mary was certainly tired; yet she would have found sufficient strength even to bear this new calamity, had not the suddenness of the blow struck her so hard. She was obliged to acknowledge that in her present agitated state, she was unfit to take care of her mother. Nothing was thus to be done but to accept the kind offer of the hostess, who, with much compassion, insisted upon her enjoying some hours' repose at least. She did permit herself to be persuaded, although she was convinced that no pleasant sleep would befall her. Yet the great exhaustion of her body, combined with her excitement of mind, created such a weakness that she soon fell into a slumber. Thus her body, at least, gained that necessary repose which she would never have voluntarily given it.

After a few hours had elapsed, Mrs. Holder stepped to her bed-side and awoke her with a few kind words.

She quietly rose, hurriedly dressed herself, and went into her mother's room. She had firmly resolved to subdue her feelings, and not to betray her grief, even by the slightest expression.

"Good morning, my dearest mother," said she, in a low voice; "how are you? Are you somewhat better?"

The mild, calm features of the invalid expressed that resignation to her sufferings

which, for many years already she had borne with Christian firmness. She mildly smiled at her daughter, though she was unable to speak. Slightly turning her hand, she offered it to her beloved child—for she had not strength enough to hold it up. With the keen eye of loving care, Mary saw through the thin veil of calmness with which her mother sought to hide her real state. After the first glance at the sufferer's face she felt convinced of the dreadful truth—she is lost to thee! In the languishing eye—on the pale lips, she read it more intelligibly than in the mute salute—in the loss of speech, so unlike her kind, friendly mother. Her heart trembled under the touch of this new grief, so suddenly befalling her. Yet she pursued her resolution and smiled whilst her breast was torn by the extremest anguish.

"My dear, good mother," she said, "whilst I, without anticipating any calamity, had joy and pleasure in abundance, a terrible misfortune befell you and caused you new sufferings! But I sincerely hope that they will pass as quickly as they have come. Only be quiet; do not try to speak; do not console me; do not pronounce a word. I can read in your eyes all your wishes—all your desires, and my careful attention will always understand what you would express in words."

She immediately began to adjust the sunken pillows under the head of her mother, and place them in a position that her mother could breathe easier. She then poured out a cup of the tea the physician had ordered, which she gave at intervals to the invalid when she desired it. Mary asked:

"Shall I read something to you?"

A motion of her mother's eye was, to Mary, an order to get a prayer-book, from which she generally read every morning. With a gentle but firm voice she commenced.

The simple piety, the pure solemnity of soul which was expressed in the lines, strengthened even her foreboding heart, and caused it to regain new courage, to raise itself above all earthly fears and sorrows. After she had read a few prayers, she came to a passage which seemed to have been written purposely for their present condition. Deeply touched by the great truths it contained, she read it with an elevated voice, with an increasing resignation and confidence; even her mother became strengthened by the happy words of consolation, and listened to them with animated eyes. Mary, who at intervals peeped at the invalid over the book to gather her wishes, observed the impression made upon her.

"Shall I read it once more, mother?" said she, for she knew that it afforded her plea-

sure to hear those passages read again that had pleased her the most.

The invalid smiled and nodded her head. Mary read :

" There are times in human life when the clear sky seems to be hidden from us, when one gray, gloomy cloud rises after the other and rests over our heads. We often think then that our measure is filled, and that there is not a lot more hard, not a fate more bitter than ours. But these are the thoughts of a despairing mind, which does not recognise the great benefactions of God. His grace is too abounding to permit you to empty the cup of misery ; you could not bear it ; before you drank half, your earthly powers would fail. But why do you think that you have exhausted the deepest suffering ? Because you have no longer a thankful heart to feel the rich bounty of those divine favors which still surround you, even when you feel the sharp sting of pain. The worm gnaws at the tree, but the crown of it is still decorated with abundance of fruit. But you only weep at what you have lost, and close your eyes against what still remains to you. A mother loses a beloved child ; in her deep grief she weeps over it, and does not see that a blooming wreath of sons and daughters still surround her. And if all should be taken from you—if an orphan should stand alone, disconsolate and suffering, without advice or assistance—if she should nowhere see the path leading from the gloomy abyss of pain into the glad vales of joy—would not the ever-loving Father remain to her ? Was it not His hand that made those thousand paths, from which the mortal eye can no longer find an outlet ? Is not the pain which befalls you merely the passing pain of earth ? And does not eternal joy dwell in the unlimited habitations of heaven ? If here all is dark as night—if fogs and clouds hide the stars, do not a thousand suns shine in the great world far above the earth ? Ay, does not even half this earth still shine in the brilliancy of light, while the other half is enveloped in the quickly-passing darkness of night ? As sure as the dawn of rosy morning is the bliss which follows the short hour of trial. Therefore, dear friends, be confiding. There is one eye which can pierce through the darkest cloud, and count the tears of those sufferers who look up for succor ; there is one heart which can feel the pain of each suffering breast that does not faithlessly turn from Him ; there is one arm which can stretch into the deepest abyss, and take the extended hand of the helpless one that is sincerely ready to grasp it. This eye always watches over you, this heart beats with yours, this hand leads you through the dark paths of suffering and danger. Therefore

confide, for wherever you wander the Lord is with you ; He does not abandon those who are faithful to Him."

During her eager reading, Mary had not observed the entrance of the physician, who had been standing at the door for some minutes listening to her, without having been observed either by her mother or herself. He now approached, but acted as though just arrived, for he wished to spare Mary the slightest confusion. After wishing her a friendly good morning, he approached the invalid, felt her pulse, and looked attentively at her.

" Hem," said he, somewhat solemnly, " we must continue the anodynes."

After asking some questions about the invalid, he took pen and paper and wrote out a prescription, the speedy preparation of which he recommended ; he then prepared to depart. Under the appearance of decency, but in reality to be informed of the real state of her mother, Mary accompanied him, as she was certain that she could bear even the most fatal truth with more firmness and resolution than that state of uncertain fear which adds to real danger. With anxious but decided calmness she desired the practitioner to inform her of all.

" My dear child," replied the physician, in a friendly tone, " you will do well to act in accordance with those beautiful words of consolation which, on entering, I heard you read. I have little hope ! If she vomits blood again, then all is over. At noon I think this will be decided !"

Although Mary was composed, although her resolution to subdue every rising feeling had been firm, yet this sudden sentence of death deprived her for a moment of herself. She broke out into bitter, silent tears, and in exhaustion leaned upon the physician's shoulder, who now endeavored to revive her courage with softened, consoling words. In a few minutes she recovered.

" It is over now," she said, feebly ; " I feel that I have sufficient strength to remain by my mother's couch. I thank you for not having kept her real situation from me. I now consider the worst ascertained, and with composure I resign myself to the loss of the dearest, the only treasure I possess on earth !"

" Think of the eye which counts those tears of yours, of the heart which beats for you, of the hand which will lead you through the solitary path of life," said the physician, " that will give you courage and strength in the last hour. Farewell now ! In a few hours you will see me again. If during that time anything should happen, send for me, and I will immediately attend."

With these words he took Mary's hand

pressed it with friendly warmth, and then quickly left the room.

Piously Mary fell on her knees, and from her inmost soul prayed God to give her strength in the hour of trial. Once more she shed assuaging tears, then the beneficence of a firm mental resolution returned to her, and with a lighter heart she returned to her mother.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

On returning home, St. Luces and Beaucaire had been too much tired to discuss the events of the day; but on the following morning, when the servant brought coffee to Beaucaire, his first thoughts were about the discovery which he had made the preceding day, and the carrying out the plans he had immediately framed. He therefore went to St. Luces, whom he already found at the writing desk. After saluting him he observed:

"I believe that we made a fortunate day's sport yesterday; at least we are on the track of a noble quarry, that may bring us a thousand napoleons."

"Certainly, certainly," replied St. Luces smiling, "but the question now is, how are we to proceed about it. I am arranging the steps in this affair, that is to say, I am writing to Dresden, to get some documents, by which I can claim the assistance of the Government here, for as we are situated now, we can do nothing at all."

"That is not what I should do," replied Beaucaire; "I fear that would not put us further in the affair. We have to deal with the inhabitants of a conquered country, towards whom we have to act cautiously, otherwise we might long ago have forced the mother and sister to inform us of the brother's whereabouts, for there can be no doubt that she is acquainted with it. Should we, therefore, wish to inform ourselves through the confession of the women, nothing in the world would be easier. I doubt that the necessary documents would be given to us; and even if they were, we should have a disagreeable scene, for the result of which I would not answer; for we must not forget that the present close relationship between the Emperor and Austria causes bitter feelings towards us. I think there is another way by which we can get possession of the secret."

"And what is it?" asked St. Luces, attentively.

"We must not be stingy," continued Beaucaire with a winning, malicious smile, "but

out of the thousand napoleons expend about fifty, which should be given to the postmaster here, if he would give up to us for examination all the letters which are sent off, or arrive for the two ladies. Do you not think that our hot knife will be able to open the seal of a lady's letter as well as that of a carefully closed diplomatic dispatch?"

"I only fear that we have been recognised, and excited suspicion!"

"Who should have known us?" exclaimed Beaucaire. "If the young girl had done so, we should have remarked it immediately; but I am sure that she has not even heard our names, as she was too far distant when we were presented, and from the moment that I was informed who she was; I kept my eye constantly upon her."

"And so did I," replied St. Luces; "but then, sir, her behavior—in her glances I believe I have observed that if she does not know us, she has at least some suspicion."

"And if the women should know both of us well, what then would follow?" exclaimed Beaucaire. "At any rate, their caution could be only directed to the leaving, not to the arriving letters, and these latter would probably give us more light than the former."

St. Luces walked thoughtfully up and down the chamber.

"Do you not fear that the stupid honesty of the officials will frustrate your plans, and even perhaps injure us?"

"I think, Sir Baron," replied Beaucaire, somewhat miffed, "that I have given you sufficient proof already that I know how to arrange negotiations of greater difficulty, and in which more was to be lost, than this. Be tranquil and leave the affair to me; I will find means to spin the thread which shall noose our adventurers."

St. Luces still paced the room irresolute; at length he took the hand of his friend and said: "Well, well, I will leave it to you. I will even give you the greater part of the reward, only do not injure our reputation for skilfulness. It is because the trace is lost here, because we cannot employ coercive means which irritate the people against us, that I wish this affair to be finished by an able *coup*. We are closely linked, my friend, you follow my course, step after step. If I advance, you occupy the vacancy I leave behind; rest assured, I shall always give my hand to draw you on before another could pass between us. Once more: this affair I leave wholly to you; still I shall not draw back, if it take a disagreeable turn."

"You may implicitly confide in me," said Beaucaire, humbly bowing; "I will hurry to cast the net, for we have no time to lose."

With these words he withdrew, retiring to his room to dress. Shortly after he set out

to put his project agoing. His first business was to enter a coffee-house, to look through the list of arrivals. He entered into conversation with some citizens, to inform himself of the character of the postmaster, and what he heard seemed to him favorable for his plan.

He therefore quietly repaired to the post-office. But to his great disappointment, he learned that the postmaster had that morning left for Dresden, and would not return for a fortnight. This information was given to him by an old clerk, in whose sharp, wrinkled features, and shining grey eyes, Beaucaire thought he read something favorable to his views.

"Are you then doing his business the meanwhile?" he asked cautiously. "Perhaps I can address myself to you about a favor for which I would be very thankful." At these words, he in a friendly manner reached his hand to the old man, and dexterously slipped a few gold pieces into the latter's palm. This was Beaucaire's usual trial-shot to inspect the soil on which he wanted to step. He gave it before he said for what purpose, convinced whoever takes money in such cases, before he knows whether it is a reward for his trouble, or a bribe, manifests beforehand that his conscience is not in the way. Yet Beaucaire worked cautiously; he at first merely asked for a quicker delivery of his own letters, and when the old man thus proved himself greedy after money, dropped some hints about his real object. He had not finished speaking, when both were interrupted by the arriving mail. The official opened the list containing the superscriptions of the letters. Beaucaire threw a passing glance at it, and guided by his good fortune, caught sight of the name of Rosen.

As the hawk darts upon the pigeon, so did Beaucaire in his rapacious eagerness fall upon his booty. The hurry with which in his excitement he wished to gain possession of the letter, like to have lost him his caution, but as if knowing his man, he said in a low quick tone—"Give me that letter for a quarter of an hour, and twenty gold pieces are yours!" At the same time he thrust his hand into his pocket to take out the money. The officer pretended to have heard nothing, but quietly pushed the letter aside, and with a quick grasp received the gold, looking with an iron glance into the way-list which lay open before him on the table. Beaucaire understood the hint; he therefore, without ceremony, took possession of the letter. With astonishment he saw, from the mail-stamp, that it came from head-quarters. He immediately hurried home, and with a triumphant mien entered the room of St. Luces, and exclaimed: "How now, Sir Baron; if victory

should be already in my hand? if the key of the mystery should be mine already?"

"What do I hear?" exclaimed St. Luces, quickly jumping up. Beaucaire gave him the letter, and with astonishment St. Luces read the address.

"Well, what do you say? This letter must give some disclosures."

"How so?" asked St. Luces.

"Patience a moment, we shall immediately see all," replied Beaucaire, beginning to open the letter. "See here!" he exclaimed, and a malicious joy spread over his face. "It begins—'Dearest mother,' and ends 'Your ever faithful L.' Are these traces? Have we the guiding thread in our hands now?"

"You have been very lucky indeed," said St. Luces, "yet this certainly will not help us much, for the fugitive will have certainly taken another name; the army numbers half a million of combatants, and among all these, to find the one whom we seek, would be so problematical that I should hardly like to engage myself in the search."

"My discovery is so lucky," replied Beaucaire—"I am so satisfied with the manner in which I made it, that for the present I will wait. But who knows whether the contents of it will not give us more ample information."

Beaucaire sat down and read the letter through. His features gradually expanded with a malicious joy. At the close he exclaimed: "We have nothing more to wish, for from this letter, we see almost without a doubt, that the two fugitives we seek are in the army, and probably in the regiment of Count Rasinski. For, although no name is written, yet there remains hardly a doubt to any one who knows the location of the regiment. We have, consequently, nothing more to do but to give the information, and perhaps to find out the names which the young men have most likely taken. From my present connection with the post, nothing will be easier than to watch and secure the answer to this letter."

St. Luces felt inwardly vexed at the fortune which had guided Beaucaire to his discovery, for he had not the least disposition to do justice to his adroitness. But he was cunning enough not to express the least of his thoughts. With quick steps he paced the room, endeavoring to appear as if solely absorbed with the means of pursuing the discovery. Secretly he had other thoughts which were directed to two different aims. At any price he wished to destroy Beaucaire's discovery, or rather use it for himself. With apparent sincerity therefore, he heaped praises upon him. "I must acknowledge my great respect for your talents and activity, my dear Beaucaire," he said; "in this affair you have acted with a

readiness and subtlety that cannot be surpassed. I willingly acknowledge that in the first moment I felt a touch of displeasure, created in me through envy of so masterly a manœuvre."

The cunning of all villains reaches only a certain point, beyond which the artful net of their mental combinations, from lack of reason, becomes a great folly. Beaucaire's subtleness formed its limits; vanity now blinded his eyes. He generally looked at things from the right side, but was not proof against flattery on the score of his talents. St. Luces possessed in a high degree the art of giving to his manner any complexion he pleased, and used it without scruple to deceive even those who had been witnesses of its employment against others. It was impossible for Beaucaire to restrain his pride and self-importance. The keen eye of St. Luces pierced through him; the stronger he could confirm him in his self-gratulation, the firmer he would be able to keep him under himself.

For the present nothing more could be undertaken. Beaucaire, after re-sealing the letter, hurried with it to the office, that it might at once be sent on its destination.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WHILE with filial care Mary watched at the bedside of her sick mother, she did not suspect the plots which malice and rapacity were laying. Alas! even had she known her present sorrow would have made her forget these prospective woes, for in deep grief the weakness of the human heart is its only salvation—it can contain only a limited measure. Mary's heartfelt, but mute prayers, was for the preservation of her mother. Like a guardian angel she sat by the invalid and with mild constancy, with indefatigable perseverance, kept from her everything that might disturb her. But in the wisdom of Providence it was ordered otherwise. The plant which had nurtured the tender blossom at its side was about to be torn away forever.

For a long time the mother had been quietly resting on the cushions with a mild, painful smile on her lips. Mary's observing eye had for some time pierced a secret struggle in the features of her mother; often already had she fearfully asked for the cause, and inquired whether she was suffering. By mute gestures, or by a feeble "no," she had always denied it. Now suddenly she spoke: "My daughter, I feel—it will soon be over; the attack returns—I shall not survive it. A secret for you and your brother—your father—

the papers in the secret drawer of my writing desk—alas, my daughter, in your arms!"

With these words, which almost breathless she had pronounced, she languidly extended her arms towards her daughter. A cramp seized her breast, and with the assistance of Mary, who tearfully embraced her, she tried to raise herself. Meanwhile, while supporting her mother with the right, she grasped with the left hand the bell, standing at the bed-side, and rang it violently. "The doctor! the doctor!" she exclaimed breathlessly, when Mrs. Holder entered and quickly rushed out again, to call for assistance.

"Oh, my mother! do not leave your daughter!"—these were the only words which, bathed in tears, Mary could pronounce. Her mother was too exhausted by the cramp to hear, or even to answer. These several minutes passed horribly for Mary, who being alone, and herself in want of assistance, had to summon all the firmness of her soul, to prevent becoming unfit for the assistance she had to give the invalid. A fearful vomiting of blood gave breath to the sufferer, but with it her last remains of strength vanished, and pale and speechless she sank back upon the cushions.

Trembling, the pale image of pain, with silent, but inevitable tears, Mary sat at the bedside, and observed how the dearest soul she had on earth liberated itself from the ties of the body. The mother vacantly and dreamingly looked on her daughter. Her breath was faintly moved by a low, feeble inspiration in the struggle with death; she strove to contract her lips, but they were shortly overspread with a pious smile—the reflection of another world. One more mild glance of love, and the eye fades. Mary bent over to catch her last breath, but in vain—the sufferer's spirit had fled.

The severe sentence of fate was fulfilled. Mary now stood alone in the world.

The first to interrupt the solemn silence were the physician and Mrs. Holder. The former had hardly thrown a glance at the couch, before he exclaimed: "We have come too late, I thought that relief was impossible." These words started Mary from her dumb, chilling bereavement. She turned towards the kind Mrs. Holder, who stood there, full of grief, and tried to say, in a mild voice: "My mother is dead!" but with every syllable her grief choked her utterance, until fainting, she fell into the arms of the hostess. But this swoon, caused by a sudden burst of feeling—till now suppressed—lasted not long. Soon the stream of life ceased wildly to rush over its banks, and quietly ran again in its calmer bed.

Mary, not willing to leave all to Mrs. Holder, took care herself to put the deceased

upon a clean bed, and to dress the corpse in simple neatness.

The two daughters of the hostess, Ann and Theresa, came in as Mary had finished this pious duty. Shrouded in white, the departed lay on a litter, the face mild without an expression of pain.

The two children brought a basket of flowers, which their mother had given them to decorate the couch of the deceased. Ann, the older, was to fulfil this duty, but tears prevented the poor child from speaking; while Theresa gaily exclaimed: "Look only at the beautiful flowers, they are all for you."

Mary looked at the children with a melancholy smile. She kissed the older one, and fondly pressed her to her breast; then, when the little Theresa laughingly extended her hands towards her, she took her by the arm. The child embraced her, and in the embrace Mary hid her tearful face.

Now the child also began to weep, but only because the grief of others frightened her. With loving, becoming words, Mary tried to console her, and said: "Do not weep, my sweetheart, I am cheerful again! Come, we will take the flowers and strew them on my mother's bed. Do you not see how calmly she sleeps?"

The child became calm again, and said: "I will help you."

"Yes, so you shall, Theresa, you shall reach to me all the flowers." She now gave the basket to the little girl, who put it by her side, and with her gentle hand now began to hand her every flower. Ann assisted her in arranging them on the couch of the deceased; the painful duty was performed almost in silence, only Theresa sometimes gained a friendly word from Mary by her innocent, thoughtless questions, and her sometimes even merry exclamations.

The deceased now lay simply decorated on the litter; the last pious duties of a daughter Mary had fulfilled. Silently, with folded hands, she stood at her side, her eyes resting upon the lifeless face of her mother. The features of life were there still; it was not yet the cold, stiff impress of death, it still seemed as if she lay only in slumber. For a moment Mary thought it impossible that every tie of this life was now severed—that this eye would never again cast a friendly glance upon her—that frame, these lips, no tender words would delight her more! Violent anguish oppressed her. Quickly taking the hands of the children, she left the apartment.

As Mary stepped outside the door, two female figures stood before her. They were the Countess and Lodoiska, who, for the purpose of continuing the connexion created on yesterday's excursion, came to make a visit to Mary and her mother.

They were astonished at the sight of her pale, tearful aspect; but it lasted only a few seconds, for to the question of the Countess: "My God, what has happened to you?" Mary replied in a feeble voice: "You enter the house of death!" Overwhelmed by the force of her grief, she sank fainting into the arms of the Countess. With warmth the latter pressed her to her breast. "Be my daughter!" she said mildly, upon which Lodoiska, taking Mary's hand, added: "And my sister!"

Oh, how blessedly, how mildly did these consoling words from feeling souls touch the bleeding, trembling heart! How quickly does one warm moment like this dissipate the cold iron limits which life for a long time often places between men. Years of insignificant commingling do not knit hearts so firmly together, as a simple, deeply touching event. On the clear stream of joy the souls of men unite; but firmer by far on the gloomy surfs of misfortune.

Thus, in this moment, the three ladies had been united for life, and with her clear perception, Mary immediately felt this great blessing, which in sad hours God sends to his children. The earnest, confidential consolation of the Countess, and the kind, sisterly love of Lodoiska, so warmly touched Mary's heart, that it appeared to her like a crime to conceal anything from those whose love had been given so entirely to her. The resolution to tell them what Rasinski had done for her brother, became a pressing necessity to her. "I cannot," she said, raising her open, blue eye to the Countess—"I cannot bear to stand before so noble a protectress, half veiled in mistrustful reflections. You have asked me about my brother! Oh, you know him, for under the name of Louis Soren, he and his friend Bernard found a hospitable reception at your house."

"How?" exclaimed the Countess, with excessive surprise: "that young man, whom we all loved for his manly behavior, your brother?"

"He is, but it must remain the deepest secret," said Mary, who now related the whole combination of circumstances by which Louis had been thrown into his disagreeable position. In the course of her conversation, she uttered also the names of St. Luces and Beaucaire, at which the Countess, who had an attentive eye to all circumstances, immediately recollecting meeting yesterday with the two strangers, and expressed a fear, but too well founded, that they might be the dangerous men. Mary also, now recollecting what Arnhem had told her, and there was hardly a doubt left. After having made this communication to the Countess, she looked inquiringly and fearfully at her. "Only courage

must not be lost," said the resolute woman, "and very careful we must be. Although, as a Pole, I admire and respect the Emperor of the French, and look upon France as our protecting ally, yet I know all the oppressions and horrors, which are committed by the officers appointed to the administration of hostile countries, who, being neither soldiers, nor men of courage, do not respect manliness, and only look to triumph over the weak. Among these, probably, your adversaries are to be found. Therefore, be careful. How do you send your letters?"

"Under the address of Count Rasinski," replied Mary, not without a blush.

"Well," said the Countess quickly, without observing Mary's confusion, "give me your letters. I know many officers in my brother's regiment; I can alter the address and arrange so that the letters will be opened by my brother. Consequently, my dearest, in future you will conduct your correspondence with your brother through me."

During this conversation they had returned to the house, and Mary conducted the protectress and the friend whom she had found to the lifeless corpse of her in whom she had lost both.

Silently the three women stood around the coffin, Mary leaning on the deeply-touched Lodoiska, and silently weeping.

"How friendly this face is!" said the Countess, as she placed her hand upon the brow of the dead to brush the hair a little back. "How quietly must the soul have passed from the body! How composed, how holy, how calm!"

"Oh! she was as mild as the evening star," said Mary; "like it she departed, and upon this calm friendly face the dawning of the soul still shines, from the better world into which she went, back upon us. But soon the long, impenetrable night will set in which will hide her from us forever!"

She spoke of the burial.

Smilingly Theresa and Ann bounced in. They held a letter in their hands. It was from Louis, the same which an hour ago Beaucaire had opened with vile hands.

"From my brother to my mother!" said Mary, and again broke forth in tears. "Alas! the poor one, he knew not that she to whom he wrote these lines would never read them. For his life we tremble, as a thousand dangers surround it, yet who knows, perhaps he will be the only one of us living. Oh! then I should deeply pity him! But no! The trials of God will not be so severe!" she continued after a few moments' pause, with a pious expression in her features: "He will not separate us, His consoling angels will support me, and their protecting hand will guard my poor brother."

The Countess now proposed to Mary to leave the house of death, to come and live with her, that she might not remain alone in this desolate dwelling, but have a confidential breast, on which her weary head might rest. Mary thankfully consented, for she was frightened at the thought of the first lonely night. Lodoiska, who, fully participating in her grief, but remained most silent when her heart was fullest, as she had not the gift of a ready tongue, still remained with Mary to assist her in some necessary requirements. The Countess returned home to prepare every thing for Mary's reception, who, assisted by Lodoiska, brought her little property into the best order, took only some books, papers, dresses and work which she wanted in the new dwelling, and then dressed herself in her mourning suit.

With kisses and tears, Mary parted from the children, and after bestowing many thanks upon the mother, and covering her face with a black veil to hide it from the curious gazing of the crowd, she, with her young friend, set out for her new habitation.

In the door stood Mrs. Holder and her two daughters. The good woman shook Mary's hand once more, while she wiped away her tears with her apron. Bashfully and sadly, Ann hid herself behind her mother, but little Theresa coaxingly raised her arms up to Mary, and exclaimed: "Mary, come home soon again!"

"Soon, soon, and very often, my dear child!" said Mary, while her voice was almost overcome with tears, raising the little child in her arms. Then she tore herself away, and instantly made an effort to recover her failing strength.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

EARLY in the morning of the third day, the deceased had been buried. Only Mary, the Countess, Lodoiska, and Mrs. Holder had been present at the sorrowful, but consoling ceremony. Mary appeared composed; she did not realise the fears of the Countess, who earnestly prayed her not to be present at the last sad solemnity. In her firm and tender soul she quickly bowed to all past and inevitable; only the doubt, the fear of what was to come, violently moved her. She trembled beneath the threatening hand of fate; if the crushing blow had fallen she had struggled against it with moral firmness, with true Christian faith.

Throughout the whole day she continued resigned, and with calm feeling participated

in the conversation. Only when the sun turned red and sank behind the blue mountains, and the melancholy silence of evening spread over the landscape, she became sorrowful again and shed profuse tears. She desired to repair to the grave of her mother; her consoling friends wanted to accompany her, but she prayed to go alone.

The grave was covered with fresh turf; it had no other decoration as yet. The church-yard lay lonely, fearfully, beneath the shadow of high trees. In pensive mood Mary sat down on the grave, her tears fell silently and fast. Suddenly she was startled by the approach of manly steps; she looked back and saw St. Luces, who came directly to her.

Disagreeably interrupted by his presence, she rose, returned his respectful salute with a slight, embarrassed nod, and was about leaving the church-yard. But with quick steps he joined, and then addressed her:

"Excuse me, if I have interrupted your solitude; chance brought me hither; I had not recognised you before, otherwise I should have quietly withdrawn."

St. Luces was equally false with his tongue as with his eyes; for just as false as were his words were the seemingly confused glances and the sadness which, with the greatest art, the hypocrite expressed in his features. For three days he had been seeking by every possible means to find an occasion to speak to Mary. The news of the sudden death of her mother was most welcome to him, for it favored his doubly villainous plans. Mary's charming loveliness had already, when he saw her for the first time, kindled in him a detestable passion. With that quick circumspection with which all villains calculate on the oppressed situation of others, he drew up an infernal plan, first to excite the fear of the sister by threats against her brother, and then, under the promise of saving him, gain her favor. No wonder, therefore, that he was displeased with Beaucaire's greedy cunning, which drove him directly upon his prey. His displeasure would have been greater still, had he only known, or only suspected, that he was his rival, and tried to attain the same end—but with greater liberties, and therefore, with less artful malice.

St. Luces was seeking for a love intrigue; he calculated that the heart of the mourner was the most easily betrayed by the consolation given by a feigned compassion; in one word, he wished to dishonor Mary, but not without giving to her the opportunity of hiding her weakness under a kind of sacred shrine, as he thought, of uniting the safety of her brother to her favor.

Beaucaire had the same plan, but in a ruder form: with the executioner's sword over the brother's head, he designed to force the fright-

ened sister into his arms. He desired only sensual enjoyment, and was regardless of the hatred of his victim.

St. Luces being better educated, and having had many such adventures during his life, in which his great address and prepossessing appearance favored him—for in his youth he had been a handsome man—thought that the charm of such a connexion must be greatly increased by the facility with which the female mind is deceived. He did not wish to be recognised under his disguise before he would himself dissolve the connexion from indifference or satiety. These plans St. Luces and Beaucaire most carefully hid from each other, and neither suspected the intention of his opponent: first, because they followed their victim through totally different routes; and, secondly, because neither thought the other subtle or base enough to extort any advantage from the state of things. Beaucaire was continually spying about to find out the station of Louis in the army, and the name which he now used. Like the ant-eater, he therefore lurked in the hidden darkness in eagerness only for a letter from Mary to her brother, to take hold of him with his malignant claws. Then he wanted to step before the unhappy girl, paralyze her by the Medusa's head of his discovery, and then sacrifice the unwilling girl. The death of the mother was, therefore, welcome also to him; for he rightly supposed that the next day Mary would give her brother information of it. He therefore had spent money enough to gain the interest of the treacherous official of the post office. But for this time he spent it in vain, for Mary's letter had long since been despatched by the Countess, who had given it to a countryman going to Dresden, where it was delivered. Of St. Luces' intentions Beaucaire had not the least suspicion, as by flatteries and attentions he was so easily lulled into self-deception. He therefore felt no objection to St. Luces' promise; the less so, as the latter always arranged and concealed them with the greatest tact.

It was the first time that St. Luces had met Mary alone. She replied to his address in a few bashful words, and wanted to withdraw; but he acted as if he had not observed it, and by a quick answer forced her to stay. "How maliciously does fate always lurk in our path! Who would have thought that you, on returning from that merry excursion, would find so fearful a misfortune lying at your threshold. Oh, believe me, your loss was so touching, that it has left no heart unmoved; even now all thoughts, all conversation continually turns upon it; there is hardly an eye in the place, filled as it is by so many strangers, which does not shed a tear for your bitter fate."

Mary shuddered, for she knew what influ-

ence St. Luces had exercised upon the fate of her brother, and therefore, she felt a certain fear at his proximity. Yet she tried to appear composed.

"I know well," she said, after some moments, "that the sudden death of my mother has created a sensation, especially as it stood in connexion with an occurrence by which many were appalled. But this misfortune must be doubly oppressive to the mourners who love best to seek uninterrupted solitude."

St. Luces well understood the meaning of the last words, but he did not wish to understand them, and knew how to subdue his anger excited by them. "Certainly, certainly," he said; "but what the sufferer seeks is not always the best. You should not at least so wholly give yourself up to grief; for some time you should devote to those who really are your friends." He was silent; Mary also.

"It has almost become dark! It seems to me a duty to accompany you, as you can hardly return to the town alone," St. Luces ventured once more.

"You are right, I ought to have gone before," said Mary kindly, saluting him and retiring.

Hardly had she reached the gate of the church-yard when she again heard his steps close behind her.

"I have struggled with myself," he said, quickly stepping up to her, "whether it is not my duty to tell you the whole truth without being asked to do so, whether these are not grounds important enough to excuse my meddling with the affairs of total strangers. Know then, that it was not accident which brought me hither. I sought you. A danger is threatening one who is very dear to you; his place of refuge will soon be discovered, if it is not at this moment. Through heedlessness you may be involved in the same unhappy fate. A feeling,—here he fixed his eye in confusion upon the ground,—which younger men only feel, but which possessed me the first moment I saw you, which I cannot subdue, has prompted me, I fear, to transgress my duties. More I cannot say—be careful!"

With these broken words he turned to withdraw. Mary, who had listened with trembling astonishment, cried after him:

"For Heaven's sake, sir, explain yourself—I pray you to explain!"

St. Luces stopped—he seemed to struggle with himself. "Explain? Is it not enough that you understand me? I transgress my duty—and yet, when I see your tears, who can resist them?" He made one step nearer to Mary and took her hand, which, irresolute, she neither gave nor withheld.

At this moment the branches close by them rustled, and Berno stood before them. Mary's pale face was overspread by a deep blush, on being found in this solitary place,

in so confidential a position, alone with a stranger. She did not suspect that Berno was her guardian angel, for in the surprise, St. Luces might perhaps have succeeded in gaining her confidence, and thus have totally destroyed her.

Berno himself was still too young and innocent for drawing an ingenious suspicion from so trifling a circumstance. His poetical rovings had led him to the grave-yard, where many an early friend lay sleeping.

When he saw Mary, of whom he had likewise heard, he approached and addressed her: "Oh, you are here. I see you again after that beautiful, never-to-be-forgotten day.—Who would have thought that!"

Guided by a feeling of purity and innocence, he took Mary's hand and kissed it with youthful respect. It was as if a veil fell from Mary's eyes, and a heavy weight from her heart. For when Berno's true feelings stood by the side of St. Luces' hypocrisy, she saw the victory of the simple features of truth over the artful wizard of deception. The difference was striking. Mary shuddered, although she knew not clearly why. A smile, a pressure of her hand, was the only answer which she could give. It thanked the young friend for his compassion and for his guilelessness, for a glance at his features convinced her that not the slightest spark of suspicion had entered his pure soul.

"It is late: I must go," she said, after a few moments.

"Yes, so late that I cannot possibly let you go alone," exclaimed St. Luces; and Berno added, with the purest kindness—

"Yes, we certainly must accompany you."

Mary breathed easier when this pure guardian angel joined her; but in the features of St. Luces the awkwardly concealed rage at Berno's interference appeared so strikingly, that even with the most plausible words he was unable to suppress the suspicion which was rising in Mary's soul.

Little was spoken during the walk. Mary hurried to get home. When they were in the first street of the suburb a strange figure came up from behind, closely passing the three, cast a rapid glance sideways, saluted, and in passing said, "*Bon soir, Monsieur de St. Luces!*" This latter returned the salute in some confusion, for it was Beaucaire.

The hotel in which the Countess lived was reached. With a mute, confused salute, Mary took leave of her companions. She ran immediately up stairs and told what had happened. The Countess expressed increased suspicion against St. Luces for his equivocal conduct.

The clock of the castle church had just struck ten, and, according to the fashion of the bathing place, the ladies prepared to go to bed, when the bell of the door was violently

rung. The servant brought a letter which an unknown man had delivered. The address was to Mary. She opened it, and found only a slip of paper with the words : " Beware of M. de St. Luces !—Your Friend."

Who was the mysterious admonisher ? In vain the ladies tried to guess. The only one whom they could suspect was Berno. And yet what could he know or suspect ?

Filled with new, painful anxieties, Mary had lain down to rest, but frightful scenes ever crept into her dreams, and often she awoke from the deep trouble of her feverish slumber.

CHAPTER XL.

MARY had only desired to stay in Toplitz until her mother should be buried and the different necessary steps made which the law prescribes in cases of death. Then it was most natural that she should repair to the sister of the deceased and place herself under her protection and that of her other friendly relatives. She had only by letter given information of the sad event, and was still expecting an answer.

After this impatient, painful, half-sleepless night, she was finally refreshed during a soft morning slumber, with the pleasant dreams which held her in their ties beyond the usual hour. When she opened her eyes it was broad daylight, and the sun already shone over the tops of the opposite houses into her room. Almost ashamed at having slept so long, she quickly dressed and entered the common breakfast-room. On opening the door, she saw, with astonishment, several ladies in mourning. Before she had time for observation she found herself locked in the embrace of loving arms. It was Emma, who, sitting at the window, near the door, had seen her first. The happy, surprised, yet melancholy exclamation of both girls caused the other ladies, who had not heard Mary's noiseless opening of the door, to spring up and hasten towards her. They were Julia and her mother. All three had come to see Mary in her dreary solitude, and take her back to their home.

Love and friendship struggled now. The Countess and Lodoiska would not part with Mary, yet her relatives wished to take her with them as soon as possible. Finally, it was resolved that the Countess and Lodoiska should accompany Mary and remain for some days on the farm. The departure was fixed for the next morning.

After they had been for some time in an absorbing conversation, the visitors expressed

a wish to see the grave of the deceased. Mary conducted them thither.

They had almost reached the city gates when they saw a crowd of men collected in a side street, which blocked up the way. They were about to inquire into the cause, when Berno stepped up to them and told them that one of the post office clerks had just been arrested, as it had been proved that he had taken money and letters containing money ; and that the judges were now engaged in searching the dwelling of the criminal.

This event would not have attracted Mary's attention to any great degree had she not suspected that she was also injured by this treachery. Now, it was possible, even probable, that St. Luccs was informed of all, and that his warning had a foundation ; but she had been cautioned also against him. Who was to solve these riddles to her ? Who was it that knew so intimately her most secret connexions ?

While she still entertained these frightful and confused thoughts, a pretty peasant girl, although her appearance betrayed a loose mode of life, approached her and offered her flowers for sale. Mary refused ; but the girl renewed her prayer with the flattering address of a persuading pedlar.

" This bunch you will certainly take," she said ; " there are there roses in it, and so late in the season." At the same time she almost forcibly pressed it into Mary's hand, adding, in a low tone, " For your brother's sake !" Mary was frightened, and the girl smiled and continued, with feigned indifference : " Yes, keep this, it is the fairest of all, and costs but three kreutzers." Mary wanted to question the girl, but with a wink of the eye she closed her lips and whispered the words, " Deepest secret."

Meanwhile Berno, to show himself obliging, wanted to buy flowers for the ladies from the girl. He did so ; and with a gay spirit the girl took the money and threw another glance at Mary, as if to say, " Do not betray yourself by a syllable ;" and gaily ran away to offer her fragrant vendibles to other promenaders.

Mary was so struck with the adventure that she trembled even at the grave, which they soon reached. Her thoughts were not with the deceased, but in the midst of the world's confusion. Being so little versed in the mysteries of intrigue, she had not thought of examining closely the bunch of flowers ; an accidental glance, however, led her to observe a slip of paper in it. With excited expectations she unobservedly drew it out and read the words : " You can save your brother if you will come this evening, precisely at nine o'clock, alone, into the castle garden, at the old linden tree. He is lost if you stay away

or betray a syllable. For the second time, beware of M. de St. Luces!"

After reading these lines, Mary stood as if petrified. What new and horrible secret, if this invitation and yesterday's warning came from the same hand! The paths of her life thus entangled in a deep labyrinth—more fearfully they approached the brink of an abyss. Alas, she deeply felt that a storm had driven her far from the holy island of innocent childhood. The soft carpet of the meadows, on which, beneath the peaceful shades, she had till now unobservedly but happily wandered, was shaken and swallowed up by a terrible earthquake. In its place now rolled the vast and boundless ocean, and frightfully lashed its waves against the dangerous cliffs.

Ought she to disclose the secret? Ought she to put confidence in those who loved her, and rely upon their protection? But could they save her brother if passion or malice wished to destroy him?

"No, I will risk it; it is my holiest duty to enter upon it," she thought with resolution; "finally, these riddles must be solved. And who is it that tempts me, then, to meet a new misfortune? May it not be some magnanimous friend, whom I might draw into difficulty, if I should break the secret? You, my mother, look from the blissful regions into my trembling heart! May your guardian spirit hover over me, and in Him I will confide!" After this firm resolution her soul became calm.

The day passed, and the ninth hour approached. Mary went into her room, sealed the mysterious paper she had received, and enclosed it in an envelope, on which she wrote these words: "To those dear to me; but to be opened only if I shall not have returned before midnight." This letter she put upon the table; when, wrapping herself up in her cloak, she quietly left the room and the house, to repair to the appointed place.

It was already dark and gloomy. She trembled, but kept her purpose. With fear she entered the long silent walks. The linden tree stood in the remotest part of the garden. This increased her fear. A gardener met her and looked at her with evident surprise. Suddenly, it struck her that she might secure the assistance of this man, without disclosing anything to him. She turned round and accosted him. "My friend, are you inclined to earn a good reward?" she said.

"For that, I am ready at any time," said the man.

"Then sit down for an hour on this bench, or keep yourself moving; but take care you are not observed. This first; when I return you will get thrice as much. But, if you hear me cry aloud for assistance, then hurry to the large linden tree yonder, near the garden wall."

"Where the man in the cloak stands?" asked the gardener.

"Yes," replied Mary, alarmed.

"Hem, hem! Your grace had better not go there at all," he replied, shaking his head. "To that man, strangers in the garden are just as unwelcome as they may be agreeable to your grace. He has just given me five guilders to give up work and go home."

"May be so," said Mary, trembling; "neither do I want you to come there: only stay near the place." With these words she gave him more money.

The gardener again shook his head and remained silent for some moments. Finally, he said, "Well, I shall do what I can. I will stay here, and your grace may confide in me. But take good care. The man appears to me just like an Italian brigand, whom I got acquainted with when I was in Naples, in the service of the Duke of Clary. But, your grace will excuse my talk. You will best know what you have to do, and with whom."

"Certainly, certainly," said Mary, with a tone which clearly expressed the contrary. She was shaken in her resolution; but, with renewed strength she said to herself: "The dearest thou hast, thy reputation, thou hast risked already; and now, thou shouldst tremble for thy life? Folly! And what interest should anybody have in thy death? It is nothing—it is an imaginary danger; and the duty of a sister demands what I am doing."

With quick steps she continued her way. When she drew near the linden tree she saw a dark figure walking up and down. Slowly and reluctantly she approached; but the unknown person had scarcely observed her, when he quickly stepped up and addressed her in these words: "I am glad to see that you had courage to comply with my request."

An icy shudder ran through Mary's veins when she heard this voice. It was Beaucaire's; towards whom, from the first, she had entertained an ungovernable aversion. But she composed herself, as she clearly felt the necessity of arming herself against this man with all the firmness and spirit which the feeling of innocence and right can give to a woman.

"I was, indeed, obliged to come," she replied; "for you frightened me hither with a mysterious threat, which makes it a duty to take a step, which, under other circumstances, I would not have done at any price."

Beaucaire seemed displeased with this answer, which, by its firmness, seemed to cut him off at once from the fulfilment of his wishes. He felt that his undertaking would not be easy; therefore, he resolved to advance with an iron head and a shameless tongue. "You speak," he commenced, "in

a proud tone, which, it appears to me, is totally unbefitting you. Know, then, that the fate of your brother is in my hand ; that I alone am able to save or to destroy him. I know his place of refuge ; he has taken a cunning choice : at least he is where least of all he will be sought—in the army."

Mary stood speechless ; terror had deprived her of breath.

" You might, therefore," added Beaucaire, with ironical importance, " well do something more than what I have till now asked of you—if you care about the assistance of a man on whose lips hangs the death or the life of your brother. But do you feel ill ?"

Mary had been obliged to lean for support against the trunk of the tree. Almost embracing her, with rude impudence Beaucaire conducted her to a garden bench close by.

" Tell me," said Mary, forcibly raising herself, " what I can do for my brother. I will not shrink from the severest task. The fullest thanks of a loving sister you may be sure of, if you will be kind enough to point out to me the means of saving him."

" Before all things," interrupted Beaucaire, quickly, " tell me in what manner I can safely transmit papers of importance to your brother, for he must immediately be informed, and provided with the means for escaping ; as the discovery of his retreat is liable to take place every day, even every hour."

Mary had already regained so much composure as not to be surprised by the subtle question of Beaucaire. " Give to me whatever you may have to send to my brother," she quickly said ; " I shall safely forward it to him. Of any other way I cannot tell you."

Beaucaire at this answer gnashed his teeth with rage. Mary had hardly made it, than she was herself astonished at the happy reply. But, in the short space of a few seconds a long train of thoughts and a combination of circumstances had passed through her mind, which necessarily filled her with the strongest suspicions of Beaucaire. The accident with the post official now left her no doubt that the privacy of her letters had been invaded. With accuracy she recalled to her memory the contents of Louis' last letter, to consider whether anything in it could give any information about his residence, his name, or situation. With free breath she recollect ed that nothing but his presence in the army could have been betrayed by the letter. With that keen eye and the increased mental power which in moments of danger inspire innocent souls, she, in whom no guile found a lodgment, discovered the snare of ruin in which she was about to be caught ; although she could not suspect the blackest depths of the abyss into which Beaucaire wished to drag her.

" It appears," he finally said, with an injured tone, " that you mistrust me ; although, by this meeting I have already given you some proof of my good intentions towards you. But, consider that I have also need to be cautious. In my position I cannot act entirely regardless of the severity of the law. If, from compassion, I risk its infringement, I must have full security that no responsibility can possibly fall upon me. On such dangerous tracks one can trust only one's-self."

" How !" exclaimed Mary with animation, " do you fear to be betrayed by the sister whose brother you save ?"

" Not intentionally, but carelessness, want of precaution, of knowledge of circumstances."

" All this is impossible in this case," interrupted Mary, " for the method which I take would simply prevent inconvenience."

" So you mistrust me ?" said Beaucaire furiously.

Mary trembled ; it was not her intention to exasperate him. With a soft tone of voice she therefore replied : " I hold the secret of another ; you will certainly not ask me to betray it. From the faithfulness with which I fulfil this older duty you may take assurance that I shall be still more careful, more cautious towards you, who bestow on me a kindness which my eternal thankfulness would be unable to reward."

Beaucaire felt confused ; the noble, firm, and yet mild behavior of Mary exercised an irresistible power over his callous heart, so that he almost lost all courage to make to her those offers for which, in reality, he had alone asked this interview. Involuntarily his conversation with her, which, by means of the consternation of his first threats, he thought to bring at once to the desired conclusion, had taken a totally different turn, and he now saw himself completely cut off from the course he had thought to pursue. But his anger at himself, because his resolution was shaken by fair words of a feeble girl, his shame at his hardened villainy, caused him suddenly to throw off his mask.

" For thanks," he said, " I hope indeed, and I have a right to expect that a handsome sister, who alone possesses the best means, will pay the debt for an important service rendered to her brother."

With these words he seized Mary's right hand in both of his, and kissed it in a manner, which suddenly opened to the frightened girl a new view of the hidden background of his intentions.

Alarmed, she shrank back and exclaimed : " Gracious God ! what do you want ?" But Beaucaire held fast, trying to draw her closer to him, and said : " Be not so frightened, my dear ; the life of the brother is well worth the kiss of a sister !"

"Wretch!" cried Mary, who now perceived the whole villany. "Leave me, or I will cry for help."

"Silence, silence!" replied Beaucaire, without releasing his grasp; "listen to me. Your brother is in the army; to-morrow I leave for head-quarters. There I shall find means in two hours to find out where he is, and only twenty-four hours by court martial intervene between the accusation and the execution. Your brother has merited death, his life is in my hands, and in yours. Will you—"

"Never!" exclaimed Mary, forcibly tearing herself from him. "My brother would despise a life which he must purchase thus! Dare not approach me; a single cry from me brings me help."

"Do not fear force," replied Beaucaire, with suppressed fury, "I am no savage beast that will tear you. Yet for the last time I advise," he continued with icy coldness; "do not refuse my offer for the last time. Here, behind the castle garden is a carriage—it will take you to a safe place. There I will meet you within two hours, and hand you the papers which will safely guide your brother to England, whither he can go unmolested. You may send them to him in your own way. Make now your decision."

Mary stood with the most violent struggle going on within herself. Suddenly she cast herself at Beaucaire's feet, embraced his knees, and with violent sobs exclaimed: "No, it is impossible! I cannot believe in the reality of your terrible threats. It is only a cruel experiment, too cruel. Stop, I pray you, put an end to my fears, and to my tears. Let me not longer remain in this dreadful torture. I did you injustice, and now you punish me for it. But it is enough, I have atoned enough! Return now to the truth! Alas, you do not know the pangs in the heart of a sister, who is trembling for the life of an only brother, alas, the only friend whom she now possesses on earth."

"Get up, somebody comes," said Beaucaire roughly, but in a low voice.

It was the old gardener, whose attention had been excited by the animated conversation, and approached.

"No, no!" exclaimed Mary, "not before you swear to me—"

"You are mad," replied Beaucaire wildly, as he raised her by force. "Will you follow me or not? for time passes!"

"Never!" exclaimed Mary, with returning strength and consciousness, raising herself majestically. "My brother would curse, and despise me. Go then, bloody monster, and fulfil thy crime! Add this new horror to the nameless wrongs thy accursed people have heaped upon our country. I care for nothing more! Death is but for a moment,

the other world is eternal. Murder me too, if thou wouldest. We do not tremble at death! I am a woman, who knows how to die. Think not then that our men do not also know how! My brother will bless me for having refused to save his life by so disgraceful an act."

Beaucaire stood tortured by fury and shame before this noble insulted woman; he was afraid of flying, and did not dare to stay. "You will repent your madness!" he finally exclaimed in a suppressed, low voice, as the gardener approached nearer. He pressed his hat over his eyes, and departing with quick steps was soon lost in the dark walks.

Mary had covered her tearful face; in a few moments she raised it again, and uttered, looking towards the sky: "Thou, my mother, who art above the stars, thou wilt be near me, since now I am left alone on earth." Exhausted, she tottered to the bench and sank down. The kind old gardener now stepped up to her and asked:

"Did I act roughly, to interrupt your grace? But God knows, I heard such violent talk, that I got frightened lest something dreadful might happen."

"No, good old man," replied Mary, "you did right! But will you see me home now? I am so exhausted; I will willingly reward you for it."

"With the greatest pleasure," he replied, and supported by his arm, Mary left the garden with tottering steps for the house of her friends.

CHAPTER XL.

"What the deuce is that again?" Bernard exclaimed, who, wrapped up in his cloak, lay by the bivouac fire; and as, by the grasp of a man's hand, he was aroused from a few minutes' slumber. "Ah! it is thou, Louis," he immediately added, on recognising his friend. "Back already? Well, didst thou meet with anything particular at Witepsk?"

"Yes, several things," replied Louis; "but art thou not angry with me for disturbing thee at this unseasonable hour?"

"I am not so very tired, but that I can talk yet for an hour or so. Say on what thou hast to say."

"First, guess whom I met with in Witepsk?"

"Well, perhaps the Grand Mogul, or the Pope, or the King of England?"

"No; seriously, Bernard."

"Seriously, I tell thee: for how, among so

many thousand chances, should I hit upon the only true one? So all my guessing would come to nothing. But whom didst thou see?"

"I was passing by a house in a cross street, when suddenly I heard a sweet female voice. I turned round in surprise; and, in a window half concealed by roses and flowers, I saw the young cantatrice from Warsaw."

"What! Franoise Alisette?" cried Bernard, interrupting his friend, in perfect astonishment.

"Yes, herself."

"Art thou certain? Didst speak with her?"

"No; because she drew back the instant she saw me. I am sure my eyes did not deceive me."

"Ahem!" mumbled Bernard to himself. "Should my suspicions prove to be so very correct; listen, Louis, I would almost bet anything that Colonel Regnard is there with his regiment."

"Thou art mistaken. I met him, it is true; but his regiment is quartered at Ostrowno."

"Pish!" answered Bernard, "that is only five leagues; and these any one can ride in two hours with ease."

"Now, listen to another thing. I think it would be best not to say anything about this to Jaromir, if he don't know it already."

"I do not think he does; but why?" asked Louis in surprise.

"For various reasons. I think, in the first place, that Regnard is jealous of him, and that might cause an unpleasant catastrophe; secondly, I somewhat suspect that the colonel is not far from having good cause, at least in as far as the bewitching Alisette is concerned. Already, in Warsaw, she threw some sheep's eyes at Jaromir, which might become dangerous to an inexperienced greenhorn like him, in these matters. Silence is therefore, no doubt, the most advisable."

"Just as thou thinkest best," said Louis, consentingly.

This colloquy between the two friends was broken off by a pistol-shot, heard close by. The men, who were resting around the fire of their out-posts, sprang to their arms, expecting instantly to be engaged in a skirmish. They listened for a repetition of the report; all remained silent, except that persons were heard speaking in an earnest and animated manner, in the direction of the farthest advanced vidette. Boleslaus, who had the command there, sent Serjeant Petrowski with a patrol, to learn what had happened. The latter returned, after a few minutes, bringing with him, as prisoners, a young man and woman, the latter of whom, from her dress, seemed to be a Russian. The young woman in great terror clung closely to her compa-

nion's arm, and tremblingly endeavored to hide herself from the curious and somewhat rude looks of the surrounding soldiers.

"Pon honor, a pretty child!" Bernard exclaimed, turning to Louis, as they passed by, and the watch-fire threw its light upon the group; but scarcely had he uttered the words, when the young man stopped and addressed him. "Oh! sir, you are a German; help a poor countryman in trouble, as he speaks only German or Russian, neither of which these Poles can or will understand."

"Very willingly. I will go with you," answered Bernard.

Boleslaus had also came up, and asked the serjeant who these people were, and what they wanted.

"They have just been stopped, while travelling in a kibitka," answered the old grey-beard. "When we challenged them, they gave no answer, but tried instantly to turn back; and when the sentry fired his pistol, they stopped. They are probably spies."

Bernard now interfered, and asked permission of Boleslaus to address them in German. "Where do you come from?" he demanded, in that language; "what are your names, and the object of your journey?"

"Oh! sir," replied the man, "our object is only to get back to Germany, where I was born. My name is Paul; and this is my wife Axinia, a Russian. Till now I have served as gardener on the estate of Count Dolgorow; but when the war broke up everything, he dismissed me, to go home to my native country."

"Have you any papers, my friends, which will confirm this statement?" was further asked by Bernard.

"Oh! yes; the very best papers, sir," Paul answered, taking from his pocket-book his certificate of baptism, his testimonials of service, and a Russian passport, dated at Smolensko; all of which he handed to Bernard.

"The papers may all be very correct; but Russian passports, you must understand, are not of any value in passing through a French army. Though I feel sorry for you, yet you will have to be sent back."

"Oh, Heavens! then I am lost!" cried Paul; "for it is only through a miracle, as it were, that I have been able thus far to escape the hordes of roving Cossacks, with my little property, for they are prowling about everywhere. I pray you, good sir, if possible, help us through; for we are truly honest persons, and ask for nothing but to be allowed to pursue our journey without molestation."

"Why did you not follow the high road to Witepsk? and why do you travel in the night time? That looks suspicious, my friend."

"Only to avoid the Cossacks; and besides, we were told that we might pass by the wing

of the army, and then, without further difficulty, reach Boiszikowo, and then the high road to Wilna."

"Well, you would meet with marauders enough there too," Bernard observed; considering in his own mind in what way he could possibly help them. "They seem to be altogether honest and inoffensive people," he said to Boleslaus; "but, even if you let them pass, sir, it will not help them much, for they will be stopped again at every step; and the more so, as the young woman is a kind of article for which I would not take the insurance upon myself on this desolate route, from here to Wilna, with marauders and night wanderers constantly cruising about, and the Jews and peasants to rob them of everything the others may leave."

"What is the matter there?" suddenly demanded a voice. It was Rasinski, who, in his cloak, and his cap pressed over his eyes, unexpectedly stepped between them. Bernard reported the case.

"In whose service were you employed?" said Rasinski.

"In Count Dolgorow's," Paul replied.

"Your papers?"

Paul showed them.

Rasinski quickly read them. "It is as you assert; this is the Count's signature. I shall assist you to continue your journey. To-night you must stay in the camp; to-morrow, a detachment of sick and wounded returns to Wilna—you may join them; I will procure you the necessary passports."

Paul thanked him in words of gratitude, and still more, with happy looks; joy returned into Axinia's bashful features. Rasinski now, for the first time, seemed to observe her. In a friendly manner, he stepped up to her, and asked her in Russian: "And you want to go to Germany too, although you are a daughter of the land of Rurik, as your dress shows?"

Blushing, Axinia cast down her eyes. "It was the will of the young Countess Feodorowna," she replied.

"And why did the Countess send you to Germany?" he continued, after a short pause.

"She thought we would be happier there."

"At this time? That is rather questionable; that country is not overstocked with contentment just now. Is the Countess Feodorowna a daughter to Count Dolgorow?"

"She is, noble sir," replied Axinia, bowing her head affirmatively, and with an expression of humility. "I was brought up with her as her playmate and companion; I have to thank the countess for everything." Then her emotion became too powerful to say more.

"If you love her so much, why then did you leave her, or why did she send you away?"

Axinia blushed.

"I understand," continued Rasinski, with a smile; "well, it is the duty of the wife to follow her husband. You have done right. Give to these persons a place down there by the hill, where they can safely remain overnight," Rasinski said, beckoning with his hand.

"Well, my friends," he commenced, when the two strangers were gone, "to-morrow we continue our march; I have not told you this before. Every moment I expect the arrival of Jaromir with despatches from Witebsk; then I shall be able to tell you whether we are to go; for I do not think that we shall remain with the bulk of the army. It is high time to come to action."

"Certainly," exclaimed Bernard, "if the enemy only will make a stand. Till now we have fought only shadows. Whenever we saw the enemy right before our eyes, and could cry out to him, as Achilles did to Hector, 'stand and fight!' then the phantom vanished again in the gloomy night. I acknowledge that this kind of warfare has wholly disgusted me. Surely, even the greatest warrior must catch the enemy before he can whip him."

"That is the nature of a defensive war, when the ground by its extent is unfavorable to the attacking force; even the old Scythian inhabitants of this country conducted their wars with the Persian kings in this way," replied Rasinski. "I was prepared for it from the beginning, for I know the Russian and his country. But this is exactly my consolation. We have not yet reached the spot where the heart of this empire beats;—we have been fighting almost entirely on our own ground and soil—on the territory of old Poland;—for Lithuania also obeyed the sway of the Jagellonians. This soil is not sacred to the Russian. Now first we touch his frontiers—here begins his country and his church. Mark me: here the sons of Rurik will defend their thresholds and their altars; and the nearer we approach the seat of the holy Ivan—the majestic Moscow—the stronger the population will arm itself against us. Not all the inhabitants of the Russian empire have a fatherland. The outer provinces are like suburbs or antechambers, in which a host of homeless slaves are lying. These are readily sacrificed; but in the interior of the house live the sons of the family, and valiantly will they defend their altar and sanctuary. Then, it is battles, and I hope victories will not fail us."

A horseman was heard approaching, at a rapid pace. It was Jaromir. Quickly he handed his despatches to Rasinski, who immediately began reading them by the light of the fire.

"To-morrow, at four o'clock, we break up. To-night then let us enjoy the short repose which is allowed us; for the next day will perhaps demand the exertion of all our energies."

With these words, he returned to his tent, while the others laid themselves down around the watchfires, and were soon fast asleep.

When the day dawned, Rasinski and his regiment were already on the march. They passed over long hills by the edge of a pine forest, extending far into the country to their right, while the landscape on the left lay extended in hills and bushes. Boleslaus, Jaromir, Louis, and Bernard rode at Rasinski's side.

"The Emperor has formed a daring resolution," commenced Rasinski; "you see that we take a direction which leads us far to the left of the enemy, who has encamped at Rudnia and Inkowo. We shall cross the Dnieper there, our left protected by the river, advance upon Smolensko, pass the Russian army, and throw ourselves between it and Moscow—a truly gigantic manœuvre, which if successful will decide the whole campaign at once. That in which, through the fault of the King of Westphalia, Davoust did not succeed agaist Bagration, is now to be put in operation against him and Barclay de Tolly together. Our orders are to defeat the advanced cavalry which may still be hovering on our right wing, and to keep it at such a distance that the movements of the main army will not be too early observed."

The sun had now risen, and threw its rays over the extensive landscape which could be overlooked from the height.

"Do you see those columns advancing?" said Rasinski, pointing to the left. "That black stream before us is quite near; from the cloud of dust there we can see that it is cavalry marching; and near that hill, which is too far off for us to distinguish the troops themselves, you see at least the brilliant reflection of their arms. Much may be decided in the next few days."

Louis, with a strange feeling, overlooked the plain on which the black lines of troops were marching.

"Will what is here being done and decided be for the blessing or curse of the world?" he asked earnestly of himself. "What if the powerful spirit which moves these masses should here find the end of his exploits, as of old, Alexander did in India! Should he fail in this vast undertaking, what if the rude and colossal power of the north should prove its preponderance and might to all Europe? Or if, on the contrary, the current of victory should flow on into the very heart of old Russia—if the standard of France should be

planted on the seat of the Czars, and be unfolded to the breeze from the proud pinnaclies of the Kremlin?—would, in that moment, the independence of Germany be secured? Would not all then be obliged to yield to France and French arrogance?—Would not the word 'fatherland' become to us a vague and hollow sound?"

He was disturbed in these meditations by Bernard, who being a painter, looked upon every exterior object from the same point of view as he would look upon a picture. "What strange peculiar charms these dead landscapes have!" he said; "only see what a fine contrast those black crowns of the forest trees form with the sky: this sad monotony really has something touching; like the desert, it makes a grand impression upon the mind. And those unbroken woods that cross the country there below, the naked hills between them with their shining red heather, and the colorless sky, with the long gray stripes of cloud;—sometimes I would love better to paint this than even Swiss scenery."

During this conversation they had come to a cross-path: to the left, the hills descended into the valley towards Ligna; to the right, they entered the forest towards Babinawiczi and Orsza. Rasinski chose this latter road; but seeing that he was no longer able to overlook the adjoining country, he was obliged to send an advanced guard out, and scout on both sides. Jaromir received the command of the former, Boleslaus was charged with the latter. Louis and Bernard remained near Rasinski, who employed them as his aids to send orders to the detached troops. They marched until evening without meeting an enemy. During the night the soldiers partly rested in bivouac, partly on the skirt of a miserable hamlet, completely abandoned by its inhabitants. At dawn of day the regiment continued its march, and approached Rasasna, where the army was to pass the Dnieper.

The Emperor had already arrived, with the corps of Davoust. The bridges of Rasasna, which had quickly been repaired, were already filled with troops, winding over them in long black lines. Rasinski joined them, and then encamped on the other side of the river, behind Rasasna, in the vicinity of the Emperor's tent. A Lithuanian Jew, who from love of money had become Rasinski's spy, undertook for a liberal reward to go still some miles further, to inform himself whether the approach of the army was known to the enemy, and whether they had made preparation to oppose them.

Towards three in the morning, and in profound darkness, the spy reappeared in the bivouac. Bernard had just awakened and

stirred up the fire, when the strange figure of the Israelite, stealing noiselessly along (wariness and caution had become his second nature,) entered the circle of light cast by the flames. Like a prowling and mischievous sorcerer, he suddenly stood before Bernard, who started at this strange and unexpected apparition. A black robe, confined at the waist by a leathern girdle, draped his meagre person; a red and pointed beard descended low upon his breast; his pale wizened countenance peered forth from out a mass of tangled hair; his grey eyes had a cunning and malicious twinkle. A constrained smile distorted his lips, as he accosted Bernard in Jewish dialect.

"Young gentleman! tell me quick where my lord colonel sleeps. I am in haste to speak with him, young gentleman!"

"The fellow looks like the devil changed into a fox," muttered Bernard to himself. "So they have not hanged you, eh, Isaac?"

"Father Abraham! what is that for a question, young gentleman? D'ye think old Isaac would have lived so long, had he not known to keep his neck out of the coil of hemp? But take me to my lord colonel: it's in great haste!"

"Come, son of Abraham," said Bernard, parodying the Jewish mode of speaking; "set thy shoe-soles upon the tracks of my feet, so shalt thou come to the presence of him whose gold thou covetest. Forward!" And winding his way through the groups of weary soldiers who lay sleeping round the watch-fires, he guided the old spy to the spot where Rasinski, wrapped in his cloak, reposed upon a little straw. The colonel's watchful ear warned him of the approach of strange footsteps; he was roused in an instant, and looked keenly into the surrounding darkness.

"Ha, friend Isaac!" he cried; "well, what news! Are they of weight?"

The Jew nodded mysteriously, and drew the count aside. Bernard would have returned to his fire, but Rasinski signed to him to remain. The count spoke long and low with his Hebrew emissary, and listened with the strongest interest as it seemed to the report of the latter. The spy's countenance each moment assumed a more important expression, and was lighted up even at shorter intervals by his false and repulsive smile, as he saw that Rasinski appeared satisfied with the intelligence he brought.

"Accursed Judas!" quoth Bernard to himself. "I could not put faith in that villainous physiognomy, though the fox snout of it were to guide me into paradise. And yet Rasinski is a judge of men; that there is no denying."

"Isaac had made his report, he stood submissively before Rasinski, and awaited his

orders with the deepest humility. The colonel produced his purse; the Jew's visage was lighted up with joy; lust of gold gleamed in his eyes. But when he clutched in his extended palm a handful of gold pieces, he broke out into fulsome expressions of delight and gratitude.

"God of Abraham!" he cried, endeavoring to seize and kiss Rasinski's hand, "bless my dear benefactor, who saves me from perishing in these days of war and misery! Hunger would rend the poor Jew's entrails, till he howled like a starving wolf in winter, did not you, noble sir, deign generously to relieve him?"

By word or gesture Rasinski commanded silence. The Jew turned to depart, pulling out at the same time a leathern bag wherein to stow his gold. With this empty bag he unintentionally drew out a purse, whose strings had got entangled with those of the bag, and which fell heavily to the ground. Visibly alarmed, Isaac stooped to pick it up, but Bernard, who had observed his countenance by the fire-side, conceived a sudden suspicion, and sprang forward with a like intention. The grass being high, and the light not falling on that spot, both men felt about for a few moments in vain. At last Bernard seized the prize.

"Give it here, my dear young gentlemen," cried Isaac eagerly; "it is my small and hard-earned savings. Now-a-days nothing is safe, except what one carries with one. Give it me, I entreat!"

The anxious tone and hasty gestures with which he spoke these words, not only strengthened Bernard's suspicions, but also attracted the attention of Rasinski.

"Humph! heavy," said Bernard significantly; "very heavy. Nothing less than gold there, I expect."

Rasinski approached.

"Heaven bless you!" cried Isaac, "a little silver and copper, nothing more. Perhaps an old ducat or two amongst it." And he hastily extended his arm to seize his property.

Bernard drew back his hand, held the purse to the fire-light, and loudly exclaimed:

"Silver? copper? What I see through the meshes is gold, and that of the brightest!"

"Show it here!" said Rasinski, stepping quickly forward. Bernard, laughing, handed him the purse; the Jew dared not object, but he trembled visibly, and expostulated in a humble and cringing tone. "Most generous sir!" he said; "it is the trifle I have rescued from the exactions and calamities of war. You will not rob a helpless old man of his little all."

"Rob!" repeated Rasinski, disdainfully. "Am I marauder? But you will not make me believe," he continued, in an accent of me-

nace, "that this gold has been long in your possession. Think you I do not know what a Jew of your sort can save in Lithuania? A likely tale indeed that whilst passing as a spy from one camp to the other, you carry this treasure on your person! Ten foot underground in the thickest forest, you still would not think it safe. And why deny it to be gold? Where are the silver and copper amongst these fine new ducats? Confess, Jew—whence have you this gold?"

Isaac trembled in every limb.

"What would you of me, most gracious lord count?" stammered he. "How should old Isaac possess other gold than what he has saved during his sixty years of life? Where should he bury it? Where has he land to dig and delve at his pleasure? And if I wished to conceal that I have saved a few ducats, sure it is no crime in times like these?"

"Miserable subterfuges!" replied Rasinski. "Here, take your gold—I desire it not. But mark my words! molten I will have it poured down thy lying throat, if thou hast deceived me in this matter! These ducats look like the guerdon of weightier information than you have brought me. If you have betrayed aught to the enemy, if our present plan miscarries, tremble, for your treachery shall meet a fearful reward!"

The Jew stood with tottering knees and pale as death; suddenly he prostrated himself at Rasinski's feet, his face distorted by an agony of terror.

"Pardon! mercy!" he exclaimed.

"Justice!" sternly replied Rasinski. "Let his person be searched for papers."

An officer and two soldiers seized the Jew, dragged him to the next fire, and bade him strip from head to foot. In a few moments it was done. Gown and hose, shoes and stockings, were examined without anything being found. Even a cut from the shoe-soles brought nothing to light. Meanwhile Isaac stood shivering in his shirt, following with anxious glances each movement of the soldiers. As each portion of his dress passed muster and was thrown aside, his countenance cleared and brightened.

"As sure as Jehovah dwells above us!" he exclaimed, "I am an innocent old man. Give me back my money and my clothes, and let me home to my hut!"

"There, put on your rags!" cried a corporal, throwing him his breeches. Isaac caught them, but at the same moment the soldier threw him his gown in the same unceremonious way. It fell over the Jew's face, enveloping him in its folds. Seeing this, the mischievous corporal seized one end of the loose garment, and pulled it backwards and forwards over the head of Isaac, who staggered to and fro, blinded and confused, but

still struggling violently and crying out for mercy. Rasinski was on the point of checking this horse-play, when the Jew stumbled and fell, thus disentangling himself from the gown, which remained in his tormentor's hands. But to the utter dismay of the Israelite, and simultaneous with his robe, a wig was dragged from his head, leaving him completely bald. At first nobody attached importance to the circumstance, and the soldiers laughed at this climax of the Jew's misfortunes, when Bernard's quick eye detected upon the ground a scrap of paper, which had been concealed between scalp and wig. He clutched at it; but was forestalled by Isaac, who, in all haste, caught it up and threw it into the blazing watch-fire, where it instantly disappeared in a flake of tinder. This suspicious incident gave rise to a new investigation. The Jew denied everything: he swore by the God of his fathers he knew of no letter, and had thrown nothing into the fire, but had merely picked up his handkerchief. Upon examining his head, however, it appeared that the hair had been recently shaved off, and that Isaac had no real occasion for a wig. Here again the wary Jew was ready with his justification.

"God of mercy!" he cried, what I have done for your service proves my perdition. When, driven by need and hunger, I undertook your dangerous commission, I bethought me how I could best be useful to you. Could I tell what duties you would require of me? Had I not even heard that they consisted in carrying letters and papers, skilfully concealed? Therefore did I break the law by laying a razor on my head! And now I am punished for my sin. But is it for you Christians to condemn me, because I have transgressed to do your pleasure?"

Spurred by the fear of death, Isaac continued in this strain with irrepressible volubility; and there was no denying that his excuses and reasons were plausible enough. Nevertheless, Rasinski found strong grounds for suspicion. He ordered the Jew to be kept in custody, and that, when the regiment went out, he should follow on a spare horse.

"If I see by the enemy's movement," said he to the Jew as he was led away, "that he has notice of our project, you are ripe for the gallows, and shall not escape it. If there is no evidence of your treason, you shall be free to get yourself hung elsewhere; for beyond Liady you will be useless, seeing that the Russians do not tolerate your blood-sucking race in their land; the only good trait I am acquainted with in their character. Away with you—let him be well guarded."

Thus, screaming, the Jew was dragged away under the curses and scoffs of the rude soldiers, and secured under guard; for the

trade of a spy, though unhappily necessary in war, is too mean and despicable for even those whom he serves to feel compunction at punishment instead of reward.

CHAPTER XLII.

AT day-break the whole French army was again in motion. Rasinski had received orders to join the van-guard, under the King of Naples. On a by-road, pointed out by Isaac, he gained so much ground as to be able to pass some very long lines of infantry, commanded by Marshal Davoust, and thus to reach his point of destination without any farther obstacle. Here he found Prince Murat, who, surrounded by his staff, with a calm eye reconnoitred the ground before them. Rasinski rode up to him to report such information as he had received from Isaac, and at the same time expressing his apprehension that the spy might have made use of a double mask, and had, perhaps, been even more useful to the enemy than to the army of the Emperor.

"If only what the Jew has said be true," said the king, "vigorous measures may yet save all. We must intercept the corps of General Newerowskoi—destroy it, and thus reach Smolensko before him. From its present encampment the main army of the enemy cannot possibly reach the fortress before being overtaken by us. The present is a moment in which the campaign of the whole year may be decided. Rapid movement is our first duty now; we will not neglect it."

These words were the signal for breaking up. The route of the army ran along the Dnieper, but so that a considerable space was still left between the stream and the high-road. Rasinski and his regiment marched nearest the river. He sent forward a patrol under the command of Jaromir; another on his right, commanded by a younger officer. To the left he was sufficiently protected by the river.

"A disagreeable business," said Rasinski to Louis, as they rode along, "thus to follow the flying enemy and be unable to reach him. The Cossacks must have been here a short time before us—for here are fresh tracks of small, unshod horse-hoofs. Probably we have to thank them for the loss of all the bridges, and that we must ride through all these small lakes, created by the rain. But what is that yonder? Jaromir sends us a message!"

A lancer was seen approaching. Rasinski galloped towards him, to receive the in-

formation the sooner. Jaromir reported that at the moment he reached the top of the hill, he had suddenly caught sight of two Cossacks, who as quickly had disappeared among the trees. They probably belonged to a larger detachment.

"Should we finally have got them?" exclaimed Rasinski, his eyes beaming with joy, giving orders, at the same time, to advance at a trot. The regiment rode up the hill, from which a wide level ground could be overlooked, chequered here and there by small clumps of underwood. The brushwood seemed only about a hundred steps in front, and nearly the same deep—yet it interrupted the view. The patrols were recalled, and in closed files the whole corps quickly advanced. When near to the thicket, Rasinski divided his corps, and ordered one squadron to ride to the left—the other to the right, around the thicket, while he with the centre squadrons continued straight forward. Fresh horse-manure, found on the way, and many tracks of unshod horses, confirmed the previous supposition of a large troop of Cossacks having passed over the ground only a few moments before. The wood now opened, and through the trees one could look into the open field.

"There they are!" cried Rasinski, pointing with his finger to the numerous pikes seen in the corn-field. "They shall escape us no longer! sound the attack!"

The trumpet sounded. Like a whirlwind the masses issued from the thicket.

"By files, right and left wings forward!" Rasinski shouted, as they reached the open space, and the deep columns changed into an extended front. The two squadrons that had rode round the little wood now also came up and joined them at full speed.

The noise and clatter created by a rapidly advancing regiment of horse, must suddenly have betrayed them to the Cossacks, who were quietly riding along, evidently not aware that the enemy was so near. A skirmish seemed not to be their intention. They put their horses in motion, and in full career rode forward until they disappeared behind the bushes which were thickly scattered over the field.

When the cloud of dust which they raised had subsided, a small town was seen at a distance of not more than three or four miles.

"That must be Krasnoi," said Rasinski. "Where is the Jew, Isaac?—he must tell us."

Isaac, placed on a baggage-horse, with his hands tied behind him, had hitherto followed the regiment among the train and servants. He was looked for there, but in vain. He had made his escape during the bustle of the pursuit.

"Then the Cossacks still have done us

some damage," said Rasinski, angrily. "I would gladly have seen that Jew brought to the halter."

Meanwhile a slight skirmish had begun between a corps of infantry and some of General Newerowskoi's light-horse, which, after a gallant defence, were repulsed. Rasinski's regiment entered the camp with the sinking sun. The men had just settled themselves comfortably around a large fire, when the unexpected roar of artillery was heard. All then was commotion, but they soon learned it to be only a salute of rejoicing.

This *feu de joie* was fired in honor of the late victorious engagement with the Russians, and also of the Emperor's birth-day.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Rasinski; "I had almost forgotten that to-day is the fifteenth of August. The salute is worth something, for it was fired with Russian powder, obtained among this day's booty. Do not let us forget this day is the fifteenth of August, but in a merry circle drink the Emperor's health."

The invitation was gladly accepted. A large fire was soon blazing. The officers of the regiment, with Louis and Bernard, who were always regarded by Rasinski as belonging to himself, arranged themselves around it.

"Our drinking cups are certainly not the most elegant," said Rasinski, after filling every one's porringer, cup, glass, or whatever he had in his hand. "The table is not too sumptuously supplied, but the guests, I think, are as noble as ever collected in the proudest saloon. So welcome, comrades!"

Suddenly his features assumed a serious cast. Majestically he stepped into the midst of his recumbent brothers-in-arms, and resting his left hand on the pommel of his sword, while raising the filled cup in his right, he commenced, in a solemn voice:

"Friends! After long years, we this day, led by the great Emperor of the French, first step upon the soil of old Russia, arms in hand! We stand on the soil on which our fathers fought many a glorious battle with their detested neighbors. Recollect, brothers, that there was a time when the banners of Poland waved from the Kremlin of Moscow, when our wociwades gave to the Russians their Czar. The Czar, Boris Godunow, who built the old town of Smolensko, which, behind those hills is covered with the darkness of night; and erected those walls and towers which, perhaps, to-morrow we will take by storm—that same Czar, Boris Godunow, upheld his throne by the valor of our forefathers. Those were Poland's most palmy days! and they will return! Like the phoenix from his ashes, the white eagle will ascend from the

smoking ruins, under which our fathers lie buried. The cinders are glowing deep beneath the ashes. In the breast of every son of Poland lives the mighty fire of ancient heroism—of ancient love of the fatherland! The day of retribution, of vengeance, of justice, is at hand. History has created the great man who will carry out our destiny. Following his banners, we rush to victory over our enemies! Rise, then, drain this cup to his success. *Vive l'Empereur! Vive la Pologne! Vive la Liberté!*"

As wind fans and spreads the crackling flames, so the inspiring words of Rasinski entered the hearts of his companions-in-arms—hearts throbbing with patriotic devotion and thirsting for valorous deeds. Like statues they had stood, listening to every word from his lips, the flashing eye only betraying life in their breasts. Now they sprang up. Amidst tears and exclamations they repeated the cry—"Vive l'Empereur! la Pologne! la Liberté!" and then drained their cups to the bottom. A thousand echoes repeated the cry—for other approaching troops had so greatly enlarged the festive circle, that it could no longer be measured by the eye. When Rasinski had emptied his cup, he threw it high in the air, opened his arms, and pressed his next comrade to his breast. Friends surrounded him, threw themselves at his feet, took hold of his hands and covered them with tears. A delirious ecstasy pervaded the breast of every man, each embraced his fellow. Deep grief and nameless raptures struggled in every soul; it was as if the lightning-stroke had touched every heart. Old men became boys again, and the rosy cheek of Jaromir, as well as the grey beard of old Petrowski, were moistened with tears.

It was long before these perturbed feelings, so violently aroused, were allayed. Solemn silence succeeded. They remained composedly lying around the fire, abandoning themselves to the delightful feelings of a cordial communion. Gradually the flames of the camp-fires waned. After the day's hard exertion, tired nature sank into redoubled exhaustion. Sleep fell upon all around. Jaromir rested his head on Bernard's shoulder, who readily supported him until he also sank down with him upon the turf. Louis still remained awake for a considerable time. All was silent around him. The brands and embers fell together; the flame died gradually away; the vault of heaven threw a dark mantle of clouds over the camp. Through the wreathing smoke, reddened by the reflection of the fire as it ascended, the glittering stars of night were seen. A sombre, grand, and silent picture.

And dark it became in Louis' soul. His

hopelessness, mourning fatherland—the beloved ones far away—the dear picture of an unknown being, who had vanished, perhaps forever, but by whom his heart was still entirely monopolized—these were the painful images portrayed on the tablets of his memory.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"**THERE** are the towers of Smolensko!" cried Rasinski, when, at the head of his regiment, he had reached the hill from which, at a league's distance, the old fortress is seen. "We shall now march down this hill, hidden by the bushes; thus we may gain unobserved the side of the city till within the range of the guns. I fear," he added, in a tone of concern, "that we shall have a hard struggle here. Do you see yonder clouds of dust on the other side of the Dnieper? That cannot be from our troops! I wish that Jew was in the lowest pit of hell; for there is hardly a doubt that he either guessed or heard something of the Emperor's intention, and has informed Barclay de Tolly. I'll wager my head that those are the columns of the main army of the Russians approaching."

"Well, then, we shall have the long-wished-for battle!" replied Bernard, with an inquiring look, to inform himself more fully respecting Rasinski's fears.

"Perhaps, but not surely yet. At all events, under more unfavorable circumstances than if we had reached Smolensko before this, occupied it, and thus cut off the enemy from the road to Moscow. In that case, he would have been obliged to take the fortress from us; as it is, we will have to sacrifice thousands before it. If we had only succeeded in cutting off Newerowskoi, we would have gained at least one great advantage."

Impatiently Rasinski rode alone up an adjacent hill, from which he could have an uninterrupted view. Meanwhile, the regiment continued on the road pointed out, which, by circuitous windings, brought them nearer to the town.

"The country is not entirely without beauty," said Louis to Bernard, as an opening in the forest afforded them a view into the valley of the Dnieper. "Do you see yonder castle, on the other side of the river, upon the hill?"

"Certainly," replied Bernard; "a stately edifice. It seems to be of a strange, ancient style of building, as it looks from here. Perhaps we will soon pass a night there—for

probably that, and the large village lying there below, are both as deserted as all the places we have passed through."

"It certainly is a wretched wilderness through which we wander," replied Louis. "But that castle makes a strange impression on me. Here I feel for the first time, that the distance, the singularity, exercise a powerful influence. The style, the situation, all attracts me wonderfully and strangely."

"In me, too, some sparks of a wonderful, romantic feeling, begin to kindle," observed Bernard. "How would it be, if a charming princess should live there, and upon storming the castle we should be the means of rescuing this fairy from the smoking ruins? To me it seems as if I already saw the red flames playing around the curious battlements!"

"Do not joke so terribly," said Louis. "Your prophecy might, at least, be easily fulfilled, in so far, that such a terrible misfortune might break in upon the ill-fated inhabitants."

"And possibly they themselves apply the torch to their dwellings, for it seems to me that the castle is not far from the highway, which runs along the other side of the Dnieper, and hitherto we have found on our road but few villages and castles which were not laid waste. It appears the Russians had rather leave us a desolate province than an undestroyed town. But there comes our Colonel back at full speed."

Rasinski came, indeed, at so rapid a pace that the horse foamed, and the dust whirled up high around him. While yet at a distance, he made a sign with his sword. His next officer, Major Negolinski, understood the signal, and ordered the regiment to advance at a gallop. They had to ride down into a valley and then up the opposite hill. In a few moments the summit was reached, and now Smolensko lay right before them. From the same spot the view opened far into the landscape, and the different corps of the Grand Army were discovered approaching the town, within cannon-shot distance on many points. But on the other side of the river numberless Russian columns were also seen marching at their utmost speed, to occupy Smolensko before them.

"Forward! forward!" cried Rasinski.—"Down into the valley, along the river; perhaps we may succeed in surprising the enemy."

He again advanced far in front, as if wishing to anticipate the moment of meeting the enemy.

Upon reaching the river, Smolensko was seen lying upon its two steep hills on either side of the Dnieper, close in front of the attacking soldiers, almost hanging over them. The roaring of cannon and explosion of

small arms commenced. Dust and smoke covered the valley and the stream. The battlements of the town-wall and its high towers soon alone rose above the sulphurous canopy. The riders followed their leader, without knowing whether they had friends or enemies before them. Suddenly Rasinski came back.

"Halt!" he shouted in a voice of command. The regiment stood as if rooted to the ground. "First squadron, left wheel! Regiment, march!"

Slowly Rasinski led his men back again through the valley, and over the rocky plain towards the height, covered with trees, which was out of the reach of the fortress.

"It was too late," he observed to his aids. "The King of Naples wanted to attack the town from this side with the cavalry, Marshal Ney on the other with the infantry, and thus try to shake it by surprise. But the Russians are too well fortified and have too many guns. Besides, the main army must be here in half an hour, and it would be madness to begin the struggle just now.— Still it is to be hoped that they will try tomorrow to dispute the possession of the fortress by a battle. For here, indeed, it is the question of defending the gates of their country."

The regiment entered into bivouac.

Towards evening an aid of the general staff came into the camp and inquired for Rasinski. He was ordered to repair to the Emperor, where not only all the Marshals, but also all officers who knew the country and the language were assembled. To dispatch quickly his orders, Rasinski desired Bernard and Louis to accompany him. They found some trouble in reaching the Emperor's tent, as, by his order, all the troops which had approached the town had to place their bivouacs further back.

"What does this manœuvre mean?" asked Rasinski, of the aid who returned with him.

"The Emperor wishes to leave the battlefield, open to the enemy. He hopes that tomorrow the Russian columns will finally make a stand and accept the battle."

"And our position?" continued Rasinski.

"There, on that amphitheatre of hills, which, in a semicircle, environ the town. It is true, there are only precipices and narrow passes which are left to us, dangerous enough in retreat."

"The Emperor has erased the word 'retreat' from his dictionary," replied Rasinski. "In any other commander the fault would be great. He is sure of his victory. He has wanted nothing but an enemy to achieve it. Would to heaven the enemy may now give him the chance!"

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"How! I hardly believe it. Why should he offer battle in front of the fortress, when he can do it in its rear?"

"Bagration, it is said, is very eager for a battle."

"But Barclay is so much the less so."

"He is not liked; the Russians hate him; the Emperor is his only support. Attacked on his own soil, it must deeply wound the Russian's honor to be compelled to retreat without offering opposition. Barclay will be obliged to fight, or the army will no longer obey him. Notwithstanding his unlimited power, the commander still in some respects stands controlled by his army; and it is the hardest thing in the world to restrict the pugnacious soldiers from giving battle; it is at the same time a most dangerous undertaking, for just at the decisive moment he will fall back, if his ardor has been previously curbed. A commander must not only be able to understand the topography of his ground, he must also have an insight in the disposition of his men; if he makes a mistake there, he will not accomplish much with all his tactics."

"Do you expect any good result from the battle?" asked the officer after a short pause.

"The most complete victory, without a doubt, but it will cost blood."

"A great deal, no doubt. We have already suffered losses in the attack upon the fortress to-day. Of the battalion with which Marshal Ney attacked, two-thirds have fallen. They were placed in the cross-fire of the Russian batteries: one single ball had such terrible effect that it struck down twenty-two men. We could plainly see it from the height where we stood."

"To fall, is the soldier's solemn destiny," replied Rasinski. "But listen!—firing of small arms?"

"The Emperor has ordered the first division to annoy the enemy, and thus, perhaps, entice him to cross the river."

During this conversation, passing between watch-fires and encamped troops, and behind marching columns, they had finally arrived at the encampment of the Guards, where the Emperor's tent was pitched on a woody eminence. He was seen just then riding away with a small suite, probably to reconnoitre the country. In full gallop Rasinski rode after him, Louis and Bernard following at some distance. For about half an hour the Emperor rode from one hill to another. Of what was said, Louis and Bernard could hear nothing, as with several other orderlies and younger officers, they were at least thirty or forty paces behind the Marshals. Now the Emperor stopped and spoke to Marshal Ney and the King of Naples; he then made a sign

for Rasinski to approach, whom he seemed first to give a circumstantial order, and then converse with in lively gesticulation. Rasinski immediately turned about, beckoned Louis to accompany him, and ordered Bernard to follow the Emperor and his suite, and then to wait before the Imperial tent, until he should receive a written or verbal order for him.

The Emperor returned to his tent about nightfall. He was followed by Marshals Berthier, Ney, Murat, Davoust and the Viceroy of Italy. Two men of the Old Guard were posted at the entrance of the tent; Bernard and the orderly officers kept close to receive orders. In the course of a quarter of an hour those three were dispatched. Bernard remained alone, and must with patience await what would come. All was silent once more; the exhausted troops lay in their cloaks and slept. Every little noise could be heard quite distinctly. Thus Bernard could distinguish an animated conversation going on within the tent. Only a word here and there was understood, most frequently the names "Smolensko" and "Moscow." He would have liked to ride a few steps nearer, but the two bearded grenadiers, with their high bear-skin caps, who, with measured steps and a noble, martial air, perambulated up and down before the tent, held him by their dark and bushy faces at a respectful distance.

"They speak of the battle, which we may perhaps have to-morrow," Bernard finally ventured to observe; "can you understand the conversation, my friends?"

"The emperor's sentinel hears nothing, comrade," replied one of the grenadiers with a severe look.

"Neither does he speak," added the other in a tone of reproach.

Hardly were these words uttered, when Marshals Ney and Davoust, both evidently highly excited, with a quick step came out of the tent and took their way in different directions without bidding each other good night. It was apparent that they were reciprocally in no friendly humor. Bernard clearly distinguished the voice of the emperor, who spoke loudly and with irritation. A few moments afterwards the Viceroy of Italy left the tent. The sentinels presented arms when he passed. But this ordinarily kind and condescending man did not return their salute—he seemed to be so powerfully excited, so completely absorbed and preoccupied, that external matters were entirely lost upon him. By the light of a fire which burned not far from the tent, and which was used for the imperial kitchen, Bernard could see the expressive features of the prince, on whose brain dark clouds of sorrow had gathered. There was so much nobleness and gentleness in those features, so much manly resolution, united

with mild majesty, that the impression they made upon the beholder could never be eradicated. With steady look Bernard still followed the figure, when the clattering of a sabre again drew his attention to the entrance of the Imperial tent. It was the King of Naples, who in his chivalrous, martial costume, a heron feather stuck in his fur cap, emerged with rapid steps from the tent, murmuring some unintelligible words to himself which however, sounded as the echo of anger and excitement. Without observing Bernard, he passed close before his horse. Bernard now plainly heard the King exclaiming, stamping his feet on the ground as he walked, in a half-suppressed voice :

"Moscou! Moscou! Cette ville nous perdra!"

But hardly had he advanced a few steps when, as if recollecting something, he stopped, turned round, and exclaimed :

"Where is the orderly of Colonel Rasinski?"

Bernard wanted to spring from his horse, but the King cried: "Stay where you are! This order for the Colonel!—quick!"

With these words he withdrew, and Bernard rode back to the bivouac of his regiment. Endowed with a happy capacity for observation and finding his way in any place, despite the darkness and the labyrinth of watch-fires, which surrounded him on every side, he succeeded in a short time in finding the encampment of his comrades. With eager haste Rasinski opened the dispatch and read it by the fire.

The night passed without any occurrence. The pickets had been doubled and part of the soldiers remained under arms, yet the repose of the others was not disturbed. At dawn of day, they expected to see the enemy drawn up in order of battle. But in this they were deceived. The whole wide plain which had been left to him for a battle-field was empty. The town, with its old massive walls, surrounded by eighteen towers, lay gloomy and silent in the dusk of morning; not the least stir or sound seemed to proceed from it. The whole French army was under arms, the troops could at any moment be brought into order of battle. The emperor, accompanied by several marshals and aids, was seen riding repeatedly over the plain. He rode up one hill after the other and looked around, in the hope, finally, of discovering the enemy from some point arranging themselves for the encounter.

One of the Marshals, Belliard, rode up to Rasinski, beckoned, and then passed some words with him. Immediately he ordered the first squadron which Boleslaus commanded to follow him.

They rode for some distance up the

Dnieper. At a turn of the road they met some twenty or thirty Cossacks, who, as soon as they saw the enemy, galloped away across the field, like a herd of frightened deer. In a moment they had disappeared ; but, a few minutes afterwards, they were seen again, from the top of a hill, and just as, on their little horses, they were swimming across the river, at a place where a bend in its course concealed it from view.

"The devil!" cried Rasinski, suddenly, turning to the Marshal, and pointing with his sword in the distance ; "do you see yonder columns ? That is the Russian army in full retreat, on the road to Borodino !"

The Marshal cast a discontented look in the direction indicated. "The Emperor will be beside himself with vexation. Till now, he had still hoped to see that army come forth to battle, and Davoust confirmed him in this illusion ; now, all such hopes must vanish, for those columns of artillery, infantry, and cavalry, which fill the road, are too numerous to expect otherwise. But, I will immediately report it to him." In a gallop, the Marshal set out across the field, to head-quarters.

Rasinski commanded Boleslaus to reconnoitre up the river, whether he could not find a fording-place, by which cavalry, and, if need be, artillery and infantry, might reach the other bank ; for he very justly concluded, that the Emperor would give orders to attack the enemy in flank, and cut off his retreat.

For more than an hour Boleslaus rode with his men, along the river's margin. In every spot which had the appearance of a ford, he was the first to make the attempt of riding through it ; but he did not find what he sought for, and came near losing some men by the experiment. Displeased at his bad success, he was on the point of returning, when he heard the thunder of a battery behind him. He looked back, and beheld the whole shore lined with heavy masses of artillery, which played upon the Russian army, as it moved slowly along the opposite bank. Now, they also posted some batteries to silence the hostile fire, and soon their terrible effects were seen. A dense black cloud, like some huge monster, spread over the field ;—red, vivid flashes alone penetrated the smoke, immediately followed by the deafening thunder. Boleslaus, who had given up the hope of finding a fording-place, resolved to go back with his men ; and now he had the field of death and desolation before him ; for, not only were these batteries constantly playing upon each other, but the whole field before Smolensko was shaken by an obstinate fight.

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point, to disperse the enemy, after weakening him by the cannonade. The earth seemed to tremble in dismay beneath the horrible dense clouds of smoke sailed slowly over the field and cast their sombre shadows on this scene of destruction.

The sun, like a bloody eye, looked down through the opaque atmosphere. The frightened birds fluttered away, and left the scene. Excepting the deep, growling thunder of the battle, which Boleslaus heard only from the distance, no sound was to be detected. In deep silence, nature lay motionless,—no breath of air stirred the trees ;—everything seemed as if paralyzed by the unhallowed doings of men, and to await its own hour of dissolution. Silent and sad, Boleslaus rode at the head of his men, over the hill, and approached the bloody field. The engagement, which would have filled the warriors with courageous ardor, if they had been allowed to throw themselves into its desolating vortex, did now, as they were compelled to look on from a distance and could take no part in the affray, create in them an opposite feeling of discontent. Being placed beyond the sphere of action, they felt more keenly its terrible realities—more deeply, because they were able to scan it more fully.

"I believe Satan himself is at work in that hollow there," said Petrowski, pointing to a place where the French artillery stood enveloped and almost hidden by the thickest smoke.

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"Ah ! sure enough ; those three clouds over there rain lightning upon them ! And they hit ! The tumbrils and ammunition chests are flying into the air as if they were standing on counter-mines. There, a reserve battery is coming up at a trot ; they must have been cut up dreadfully by this time. The Muscovites seem to get savage. If we only had them in the open field, so that the cavalry also might come at them ! The sabre is to-day as light in my hand as a walking-stick. By thunder ! I would—hell and destruction !—another tumbril gone !" And the spot which Petrowski had pointed out did truly, at this particular juncture, as they drew nearer, present no bad specimen of a fire-vomiting volcano. The smoke hovered over the place in black, towering columns ; then passed slowly away, and rolled itself in dense and heavy masses across the field, behind the battery. The fire of the enemy became, for this reason, more and more murderous, because he had the advantage of the wind, and his antagonist plainly in sight. Thus, balls and shells poured incessantly into the batteries with destructive effect ; the ground literally trembling under the feet of the combatants.

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"I know it already," he replied; "for while thou wert gone, we have found some persons who are acquainted with the localities. But there is a passage further up the stream, which, however, we can only make use of towards evening with any advantage; it is impassable for artillery, as the banks are very steep and overgrown with brushwood. To attack the Russians in the rear with a whole corps, is therefore impossible; still, we might, perhaps, alarm them a little, capture a troop of marauders, and make some booty. This charge has been entrusted to us. I am glad of it; we shall, at least, have some small share in the affair of this day, where cavalry, however, could do nothing more than stand still and look on."

Meanwhile, the battle, under the walls of the town, continued with the greatest fury. Rasinski and his officers had taken up a position from whence they could observe the whole scene. The position of the batteries near the river was still one where death and massacre reigned paramount. The eyes of the spectators were with painful anxiety directed towards the spot where so many of their comrades had to be sacrificed, in order to ensure the success of the day. A troop of horsemen emerged from the thick whirling smoke, and took their way across the level ground, towards the Emperor's tent. When they came nearer, all with astonishment beheld the King of Naples. He rode slowly, returned the respectful salute of the officers, and passed them without giving a look behind. But one of the officers of his suite rode up to Rasinski. It was Colonel Regnard.

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The favorable moment had now arrived for the execution of Rasinski's plans. He ordered his men to mount, and then marched along the Dnieper, but so far from the banks that he could not be discovered from the other side. After proceeding for about an hour, this precaution became unnecessary, for it became perfectly dark.

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from file to file. He kept by his side a young man from the neighborhood, who served him as guide ; he conversed with him in the Russian language, so that none of those around him could understand what was said. The whole expedition was to be kept secret. They were in a wood of considerable extent, when Rasinski ordered a halt. Accompanied only by the guide, he rode forward, commanding the regiment to await his return.

The expectations of all were powerfully aroused. Deep silence prevailed all around. The roar of the battle, which for a length of time had been heard in the distance, had ceased. The setting in of night had put an end to the bloody drama. The wind only was heard, as it rustled among the branches and tops of the trees ; and from time to time was distinguished the monotonous cry of the solitary moor-fowl. Half an hour passed away in this manner. Rasinski returned and gave orders to advance. This was done at a slow pace. They had to ride up and down some steep hills and declivities, overgrown with scrub-wood and fern. Unexpectedly they found themselves on the edge of an abrupt precipice ; the Dnieper was rushing beneath. "By twos, forward!—follow me!" said Rasinski, in a low voice, yet so that he was heard by those nearest to him. In low and continuous accents the order was repeated through the whole line. His horse carefully picked his way down the steep descent, after which he passed through the river, in this place not more than three feet deep. Boleslaus followed with his squadron. The others had to wait a considerable time on the elevated bank, as the passage could only be effected quite slowly.

Bernard, ever attentive to localities and everything around him, jostled Louis on the elbow, and pointing with his finger towards the opposite shore, said : "Are not those windows over there dimly lighted ? I think I must be very much mistaken if we are not in the vicinity of the castle that attracted our notice yester morning."

"May be so," replied Louis ; "but only see that brilliant light behind us. What can that mean ? The whole sky above the forest shines like burning gold."

"Perhaps it is the rising moon," said Jaromir, who had approached.

"That cannot be," said Bernard ; "for the moon does not rise until midnight."

Now, a red, vivid flash, as of lightning, pierced the blackened heavens, throwing a bloody reflexion across the turbid billows of the stream below.

"That is fire," cried Jaromir. "Look—look !—Now it bursts forth ; the flames rise in awful grandeur. It must be Smolensko burning!"

There was shortly no doubt left of this fact ; for the lurid glow, intersected by brighter belts of fire, rose every moment with greater vehemence on the horizon, and began to throw its illuminating glare even on the spot where the troops were posted. Now, the black battlements and turrets of the fortifications of the town began to stand out in bold relief against the golden, ignited background ; and the tops of the nearest trees appeared as if decorated with a halo of late evening glory. Such a beautiful, yet terrific picture, filled every breast with a strange shuddering.

"Seest thou now that I was right?" added Bernard, turning to Louis and pointing to the other bank ; "dost thou now recognise the castle in the light of those flames ? Hark ! the bell in the village ! It is the alarm-bell, I think."

And, indeed, at the distance of hardly a mile before them, lay the ancient structure. A mysterious sensation took possession of Louis' bosom. Could it be that the prophecy, uttered half in jest, was about coming true ? Were carnage, murder, and flames to rage even here ?

But there was no time allowed him to follow these meditations, for, at that instant, the troop to which he belonged set itself in motion to pass through the river. Bernard rode close by his side. When their horses entered the water, he said, half jokingly, half shuddering : "Do we ride through the Phlegethon, the Styx, or the Cocytus ? One does not know whether it is a black or a fiery river of the infernal regions." The bloody reflexion of the flames, which fell far across the waves, gave rise to this remark. "At least," he continued, "to us it is the Rubicon which we pass. *Jacta est alea !* We hardly know whether we shall succeed in passing over, much less if we shall ever repass it alive. At any rate, I will now make my will, brother, dost thou hear ? Whether the fishes in the Dnieper or the ravens of old Russia shall riot on my flesh, thou art my universal heir. But my heart—I do not require that thou shouldst extract that callous lump of flesh out of my bosom—take it with thee back to thy sister Mary, and divide it between you."

"How comest thou, just now, to speak of my sister?" asked Louis, much moved.

"She is a jewel of a girl—a charming, excellent child, and deserves a better brother than thou art ! But why she stands before my soul just at this moment, as if I had drawn her portrait as faithfully as a mirror, I know not : for though we see the bloom of ideas, we know not where they were sown. Enough, though my thoughts make some twenty or thirty trips every day of my life to Dresden or Toplitz, they have just now taken

an extra excursion, and speed like swallows towards their home. True, there must be some reason for it, for everything in creation is the effect of a cause. I will make a memorandum, that, on the 17th of August, just at ten o'clock at night, I thought of Mary, and that just in this minute she has become ten times dearer to me than ever."

Louis warmly pressed the hand of his friend. Although he often thought that he discovered indications of a silent but deep affection for his sister dwelling in Bernard's breast, and with which he had been infinitely pleased, yet the eccentric man had never permitted even his friend to see clearly through the distorting, many-colored prisms of his jocund disposition. And then Louis always had a feeling as if Bernard's soul was moved by so many more elevated feelings and deeper and impetuous passions, that the delicate blossom of love, for such a gentle, shrinking being as Mary, could hardly take root in this turbulent chaos. He replied: "It is quite natural that thou shouldst think of her. In moments of estrangement the images of our beloved ones rise before us with increased distinctness."

"Yes, yes, thou art right," said Bernard, partly in joke and partly to change the current of the subject; "the present picture is shaded infernally black, but light will soon be shed upon it; for those torches down there upon the edge of the sky shine brighter and brighter; we shall soon be able to see the mice running across the field. But I find the Dnieper is confoundedly cold, and thy horse has, besides, showered a whole mouthful of water over my hips. Wouldst behave like a good comrade, thou shouldst teach thy horse better manners. God be praised!—land! I never had much taste for sea voyages."

While thus chatting together, they rode up the other bank, which they found yet steeper than the one they had left.

When the regiment was assembled, Rasinski, at whose elbow the guide steadily remained, placed himself at its head, and rode full speed towards the castle, right before him.

They were now only a few hundred paces from it. Rasinski commanded a halt. "Friends," he said, "we are within reach of a prize. In yonder castle, as I am I believe correctly informed, are assembled many Russian generals and nobles, to celebrate a marriage. My intention is to seize them all by surprise. Now let us quietly approach until we see the ground clear before us, so that no further obstacle can arrest our course. But then let us fall upon them like a whirlwind! Now, forward, friends!—be brave, be quick—daring, but cautious. Forward!"

They advanced until they reached a sholv-

ing ground. Rasinski then gave the word for the attack to be sounded. Putting their panting steeds on the gallop, the whole detachment rushed forward on the path to the castle and the adjoining village.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE momentous events which had crowded the sensibilities of Feodorowna in so short a space of time, and seriously affected the serenity of her mind, were well calculated finally to overwhelm her. She had sunk upon a sick bed; a violent fever raged throughout her highly-excited system: the physician considered her state very critical. Axinia would therefore on no consideration leave the bedside of her dear mistress, although Paul as well as herself entertained great fears about their own fate for the future, in case Feodorowna should die before they could succeed in getting out of the country. Axinia was the more deterred from relinquishing her part; as the patient evidently could endure the presence and attendance of no one else, and immediately fell into an irritated and consequently dangerous state, as soon as other assistance offered to come near her. This was especially the case with regard to her mother; her presence always inspiring Feodorowna with a certain terror, and throwing her into spasms of anguish as often as she approached her couch. In her calmer moments Jeannette was permitted to take the place of the exhausted Axinia; but as soon as the fever increased, Feodorowna, with the impatience incident to disease, again asked for Axinia. Nearly a month passed in this melancholy manner. Feodorowna began slowly to amend, but she was so reduced by sickness that her life was still in imminent danger. Though such violent paroxysms of fever were no longer to be apprehended, yet it seemed very doubtful whether the system retained sufficient vital power to rally from such utter prostration. But the mild season which set in just then had a beneficial influence upon her. July, with its ardent sun spreading a rich glow over even these northern wilds, quickened the bruised and broken stamina of life into the expansion of a renewed bloom. Feodorowna recovered almost against her will; and if the deep, hidden grief which corroded her heart had not manifested its traces on her cheek and lips, and slightly dimmed the brilliant azure of her eye, her charming person would have developed itself in a loveliness resembling that of a rose in whose chalice the trembling drops of a passing shower still

glisten. But she was not refreshed by the showers of heaven—she was broken solely by its storms.

He who is himself a sufferer has a heart full of sympathy for the wishes and sufferings of others. Feodorowna therefore felt that it was her first duty to dispel the last threatening cloud from Axinia's mind—to hasten her marriage and departure with Paul. Father Gregorius pronounced the benediction of the church over the young couple, and on the same day they left the castle, laden with rich presents, to seek through the track of the war the way to the enjoyment of quiet felicity on a different soil.

Feodorowna now remained entirely alone; for in defiance of the great sacrifice she had made, notwithstanding the resignation with which she had yielded to the command of her parents, her mother continued ever frigid and unfeeling. She did not seem even to harbor any pity for the consuming sorrows and pain which Feodorowna endured for her sake. It is true she had never shown herself otherwise, and in former years had returned the warmest love of her daughter only with a kind of haughty complacency.

Feodorowna had been accustomed to this, and saw in those stiff and chilling formalities, nothing but the sacred superiority of the maternal relation, which she felt bound to obey and honor. But now she felt, that a living, self-sacrificing child stands in need of a mother's heart of a different stamp. Thus her love had been transmuted into the awed terror of forced respect, and that which had so strongly manifested itself during her sickness, now appeared at least in its most prominent traces. She was seized with a kind of indefinable terror whenever she found herself in the presence of those with whom her wounded breast ought to have found consolation and relief.

Ochalskoi and Dolgorow were with the army; but the latter had sent written word during the first days of August, that he should shortly arrive at the castle, to celebrate the nuptials of Feodorowna with the Prince, for which now, all the preparations had been completed. The obstacles which till now had existed, had rested chiefly in the family of Ochalskoi, who according to an old family compact, needed the consent of some relations before he could marry. These persons' private interests were concerned in the fulfilment of this compact, and as from selfish motives they would rather have seen the Prince married to a nearer relation, it had cost some trouble to overcome their objections, and this had not been done without some sacrifices on the part of Ochalskoi. He had now obtained three days leave of absence to celebrate his marriage, after which his young

wife and her mother, were immediately to journey over Kalouga to his domains in Asia, that they might be entirely removed from the distracted scenes of the war. This was at the very moment when the great Russian army had quickly thrown itself into Smolensko so as not to be cut off by the French. On the same night, when the army had already begun its retreat from the fortress to Moscow, Dolgorow and Ochalskoi arrived at the castle. The marriage which was to be performed by Gregorius, was fixed to take place the following morning. In accordance with Dolgorow's wish, the nuptial night was to be passed at the castle; but on the next morning the gentlemen were again to repair to their posts in the army, while the ladies were to set out upon their journey to Ochalskoi's estates over Jelina and Kalouga.

The appalling moment had then arrived when Feodorowna saw the dark prison open before her in which she was to sigh away her entire future existence. Even the sweet consolation to have by this sacrifice established the happiness of others, became powerless in view of the approaching reality. The poor victim had no more tears to shed. She looked upon her future with a cold shudder only. Everything conspired to make the day a dreadful one. In the distance was heard the deep roar of the cannon from the besieged fortress; whenever she went to the window of her chamber, she saw long straggling lines of horsemen, who being the last remains of the great retreating army, passed in disorder over the field, along the high road to Moscow, about half a mile from the castle. The sight of these hordes of Tartars and Cossacks, who came from countries not yet reached by European culture, and among whom she was to reside in future, filled her with gloomy horror. "Oh why did I become acquainted with lands more beautiful, manners more refined, men more civilized!" she sighed. "But neither was I happy there; only brief and pleasant dreams, reflected their charms upon the dark background of my days."

Lost in painful reverie, the unhappy bride stood at the window, looking out upon the sterile landscape, through which raged the havoc of war, and out upon the lead-colored sky, towards which the clouds of battle heavily rolled. Suddenly she felt herself slightly touched by the hand. It was Jeannette carrying the bridal dress on her arm. Feodorowna shrank in dismay, a sigh escaping her at the same time; yet no words of complaint were heard from her lips; passively she suffered herself to be adorned like the victim led to the altar.

Jeannette had just placed the bridal wreath among her tresses when Ochalskoi entered,

to offer his deroirs and to conduct her to the church, where Gregorius was awaiting them.

When she must yield to unavoidable necessity Feodorowna ever summoned a heroic fortitude to her aid. In silence, but with a firm step she descended the broad stairs, leaning on Ochalskoi's arm. In the saloon she was received by her parents and the assembled guests. There were only a few male relatives of the two families, mostly elderly gentlemen of high rank, and several generals, who being Ochalskoi's superiors, had been invited. The procession, headed by the young bridal pair, moved towards the church. The inhabitants of the village had assembled and formed a double line, through which Feodorowna passed, saluting her friends on either side with a melancholy affability. Flowers were strewed on her path; but they could not cover the yawning gulf which the bride saw opening beneath her.

The guests and the people were also solemn, for a marriage ceremony celebrated under circumstances such as the present, when the cheerful tolling of the bells was accompanied by the not distant roar of a dreadful conflict; with hundreds of bleeding victims sinking, while words of peace and blessing are pronounced, cannot be called a happy event! Gregorius spoke with deep emotion, grave but consoling; all listened in solemn silence. In a few minutes the rites of the church were performed and the procession took its way back to the castle where a dinner was prepared for the assembled guests. During the repast, the cannonading continued, in fact increased in violence. The Countess Dolgorow became alarmed, and suggested whether it would not be best to break up the festivity.

"We are here in perfect safety," said one of the generals at the table; "Smolensko is the key of this road. As long as that gate is shut no enemy can trouble us. And we are moreover secured against any little annoyance by large troops of Cossacks, who patrol up and down along the banks of the river."

"Yet I wish," said Dolgorow with a dark look, "that more efficient measures might be adopted for our defence, although it comports well with my family plans that this has not been done; for otherwise I would hardly have found a leisure day on which the marriage of my daughter would have been possible. But the welfare of the land is paramount with me, and I think it would have been more serviceable to the country had a battle been accepted when offered to us under such favorable circumstances as here has been the case. I candidly confess that I cannot sympathize in the views of the Field-Marshal, who ever seeks safety in retreat."

"No more does any one of us," replied the

general, in a decided tone. "If Count Barclay de Tolly were a born Russian, he would not bear the disgrace of our country so philosophically. But here, when I see none but true Russians together, I may say a word in confidence. I think that the greatest part of this state of affairs has passed by; it is said that the Emperor has at last yielded to the pressing arguments of all classes, and of men high in office, and that he has determined to confer the chief command upon another."

"The Prince Bagration?" asked Dolgorow quickly.

"I am not yet at liberty to mention names," replied the general, "but he is a noble, well-deserving Russian. Already negotiations have been entered into with him. A brother in arms of Suwarow will restore to Russia its ancient glory."

"Then it is Prince Kutosow and none other," said Ochalskoi with great animation. "To that worthy old man, be he our commander-in-chief or not, let this bumper be drained." At the same time he stood up and raised the brimming goblet to his lips. The rest followed his example, touching each others' glasses.

"Be our leader, who he may," said Dolgorow in a loud voice, "we will word our toast in such a manner that it can apply to none but a worthy object. To that son of Russia, who inflicts a bloody revenge for the wrongs done his country."

"Vivat hurrah!" cried they all, amid the clatter of glasses and goblets.

The Countess Dolgorow rose, her eye beaming with unusual brilliancy, her habitually cold and rigid features quite animated.

"Then I also will bear in mind the ancient custom of my country," she said, "and thou Feodorowna follow my example."

With these words she took the veil from her head, tore it in pieces and distributed strips among the gentlemen sitting nearest to her. The bride also took off her veil, beneath which, till now, she had tried to hide her agonized features. A virgin blush overspread her countenance when she tore and divided it.

"Accept it, my husband," she said in a tremulous voice, "take with you into the battle this memento of the wife you leave behind; take it also, ye worthy defenders of my country. May it in the hour of danger remind you that it is the aim and purpose of your valiant deeds to preserve inviolate to the daughters of Russia the sanctuary of female purity, and that their warmest, heartful thanks will be awarded you when once crowned with laurels, you can return this emblem of consecration, ennobled by precious drops of blood from heroic patriots."

Feodorowna had cast her eye to the ground while she uttered these words to the old war-

rior, who occupied the place of honor at her right. He replied by seizing her hand and imprinted an impassioned kiss upon it, saying,

"Bearing the memory of such a hand, one goes into battle as gaily as to a wedding party. I hope, charming lady, soon to return to you this sign, embroidered with true Russian blood, for I should be truly proud of doing so, that you might redeem it according to the custom of our country."

A deeper blush now colored Feodorowna's cheek, because the privilege, thrice to kiss the fresh lips of the woman, or virgin, whose keepsake was thus returned, could, according to the old custom, never be refused to the valiant son of his country, by any daughter of Rurik's race, a custom which long since had been expunged from the manners of the day, only recorded in historical tradition, and which lately had again been called into existence. For in any great crisis in their fortunes nations love to remember the usages of their fathers, the antiquated manners of their country, their heroes, and their national history with growing gratitude; often not without inwardly reproaching themselves for having so long forgotten these hallowed traditions.

The evening had set in when the banquet broke up, and the guests dispersed to pass the time in the adjoining rooms. Feodorowna looked forward with trembling anxiety to the approaching hour when, left alone with her husband, she would be compelled to encounter the last fearful struggle with her lacerated heart.

It was then that Jeannette approached her at a moment when she had retired to an adjoining room from the company to arrange something about her dress, informing her, that Gregorius was in her chamber, urgently desiring to see her. Feodorowna hastened gladly to comply with the request of the worthy old man. Alas! her whole heart was drawn towards him, for from him alone she expected to receive consolation and strength for the trying ordeal which she was about to encounter. She found him in her room, with an expression of countenance more serious than usual.

"My daughter," he addressed her, "the hour has come, when I must speak to thee of important things. Thou art now irreversibly the consort of Prince Ochalskoi, for the sacred rites of the church have united you. Death alone can dissolve the union."

"Oh! my dear father," faltered Feodorowna, "I know it, but I shall not falter in the discharge of my duties. To him, to whom with repulsive heart I gave my word I shall be faithful and devoted until the end of my days. Alas! I hope this will not be far off!"

Overcome with grief she leaned her weary

head on the breast of the venerable priest.

"It is not of this that I wish to speak, dear daughter," replied Gregorius, mildly, "for I am convinced of the strength of thy virtues. I came to impart to thee a secret which thy nurse Rushka, entrusted to me as a last confession on her death-bed, and which in case death should have taken me from this world, she penned with her own hand in these pages. I promised her on my sacerdotal oath not to divulge their contents to thee until thy marriage should be celebrated. This has taken place, and I may now open my lips. Thou art not Dolgorow's daughter, no native of this country. Germany is thy native land, but thy parents have long since departed this world. Count Dolgorow took thee as his child because his wife gave him no hope of becoming a father. These are the portraits of thy parents which Rushka gave to me."

With these words he handed to Feodorowna a letter and an open pocket-book with two portraits, representing a young lady and an officer.

Like a statue Feodorowna stood before Gregorius, her eyes staring and fixed, and making fruitless attempts to speak. Half unconsciously she took the things which Gregorius handed to her and put them on the table before her. Finally, pressing her folded hands violently against her bosom, she uttered with a shrink of terror the words: "Not their daughter!—and yet—Oh, Almighty God!"

"Calm thyself, my child," said Gregorius mildly, "turn thy heart humbly toward Him who wonderfully guides the fate of man. I have discovered to thee what was most important and most necessary. Read these papers and thou wilt learn everything further to be known in this matter. I must now leave thee. Let the first violent emotion subside which now labors in tumultuous billows within thy breast. When thou art alone thou wilt soon regain thy self-possession.—Shouldst thou stand in need of me more, send for me."

With these words the old man left the room. Feodorowna was unable to give a reply; she staggered to a seat and rested her heavy head in her hands. It was long before she was able to open the papers which were to disclose to her the secret of her life. The likenesses of her parents lay before her; with fixed gaze she looked upon them, but the streaming tears drowned her sight. Finally she opened the five seals of the letters addressed to her, and read what Rushka had written with her own aged and trembling hand as follows:

"MY DEAR CHILD:—

"As long as I lived, an awful oath, forci-

bly extorted from me, sealed my lips; when I am no more, my voice shall still sound from my grave, to disclose to thee the mystery in which thy youth is enveloped. Thou art neither the daughter of Dolgorow nor of the countess. Thou wert but a few days old when in Germany, after thy mother's death, they adopted thee as their own child. At that time the count had been married already four years; he had given up the hope of ever becoming a father. The loneliness of a childless life, but more than this, the desire to see strange countries, had induced him to undertake extensive journeys. In May of the year 1793 he was at Pyrmont; here he became acquainted with thy mother, who, as a widow, accompanied her son, a beautiful boy five years old, with brown curly hair, named Berno; thou wert at this time yet unborn. She had come hither to regain her impaired health. Her name was Louisa Waldheim; her husband was an officer, and had been killed in a duel. Thrown by this disaster into a state of indigence, and being sickly, expecting the birth of another child, handsome and gentle as she was, she attracted, notwithstanding her secluded habits the attention of several of the richer bathing guests. The Countess Dolgorow, who had hired the second story of the house in which thy mother occupied a small room, proposed to receive her as a companion, and undertake to teach the count and herself the German language. Thy mother, urged by her pressing wants, accepted the offer; three months later, when we had already left Pyrmont, and were on a journey to Switzerland and Italy, thou wast born. In a solitary inn, not far from Freibourg, in the Black Forest, thou first opened thine eyes upon the light of day. As the confinement of thy mother approached, the count first wanted to leave her with the good people on the spot, let me stay with her, and himself to continue the journey with the countess until we should be able to follow them. But a slight indisposition of the countess herself induced him to participate in our seclusion until thy mother should be fully restored. But she did not recover; on the eleventh day after thy birth she died. I was her attendant in the last hours of her life; when dying she entrusted to me the care of her children and handed me her whole little property to keep for you. Among other trinkets there were her own and her husband's wedding rings. Immediately after the interment, I remarked that the count was revolving some important plan in his mind; he often locked himself up with the countess, and they frequently had long and animated conversations together; several times when I was present, he spoke in English, which I did not understand; I could only ascertain

that thou wert the subject of their discussion, as they both often looked at thee with marked attention. A few days afterwards the count discharged the two German servants whom he had with him, under the pretence that in Italy he wanted to engage native help; he gave them money for their journey and sent them back to their homes. Finally, one morning, he called me and told me that it was his intention to adopt thee as his daughter. I was of course very glad at this, for the fate of the two children had often weighed heavily on my mind; but my joy soon turned to the deepest sadness when he declared that he would provide for the brother in a different manner, as it must remain a profound secret that the countess was not the child's mother. 'Then the two are to be separated?' I exclaimed in fear and amazement. 'It will be no misfortune for them, since they have never known each other,' replied the count harshly. I was silent and confused. 'But,' he continued, 'you are the only one who knows the secret; but I demand of you that you take a solemn oath on the consecrated Host, never to divulge it. If thou refuse, recollect that thyself and thy brothers are my serfs—that with one word I can plunge you all back into the most galling servitude.' This threat was terrible. Through the kindness of the old count, the father of thy foster-father, my brothers, had already become rich merchants in Moscow. But the pride of the Russian nobles to possess rich serfs was the reason that, though otherwise well-disposed, he had not given them their letters of emancipation. I knew what was the terrible lot which awaited them if I should refuse to take the oath. And moreover, as the count's resolution seemed to secure thy happiness, as I considered that thou couldst lose nothing in a brother whom thou hadst never known, and when finally on my prayers he promised to provide for the boy liberally, I resolved to submit to his will. But now, in the approaching hour of death, knowing that thou art far away from me, my dearest child—the upbraidings of an awakened conscience forbid that I should envenom and crush thy true and loving heart by persevering in an eternal untruth. The countess could come into possession of a great portion of her estates when she had become a mother and left issue. It was not affection, but self-interest, the basest egotism which prompted both of them to adopt this plan. It is only two years ago, shortly before his departure for England, that she received this inheritance, which was just about sufficient to repair the count's finances, which had become greatly embarrassed through extravagance and love of splendor, which his means did not warrant. Now he

thinks to gain a rich son-in-law through thy means, whose beauty and angelic kindness captivate every heart. Thou hast been educated to take thy rank among the rich and noble ; thou hast gained the prerogatives of being free-born ! O my dear ! these prerogatives are infinitely great. Shouldst thou learn the secret of thy birth too soon it might put these advantages in jeopardy. It must therefore not be imparted to thee until, by thy marriage with a free-born Russian, the privileges of thy position in society shall have been irrevocably confirmed. I have confessed all to good father Gregorius, which like a heavy weight burdened my soul ; I entrust him with this paper, that he may guard it in the vestry of the church, and destroy it in case thou shouldst die unmarried, or deliver it into thy hands when no one can deprive thee of that which has been purchased with the loss of a brother."

Feodorowna was obliged to lay the paper aside, the bursting tears preventing her from reading any farther. But she soon recovered from this weakness, by a burning impatience, especially to learn something respecting her brother's fate.

"Having taken the oath my master thus exacted from me, I left the apartment. The little, five-years old boy, thy brother, ran gaily but quietly up to me and with his tiny fingers pointed to the cradle to show me how gently thou wast sleeping. I now recollect the two rings. A dark foreboding, for which I could not account to myself, prompted me to secure to the boy, at least this one memento. Quickly I took his Sunday dress and sewed the ring into the lining. It was well that I did so—for in a few moments the count entered and ordered me to dress the boy, as he would drive out with him. An ominous look told me what was his intention. With tears I executed the command. The boy could not understand why I wept, but was glad of the drive he was to have. His impatience—yes, his impetuosity, for he was as wild and lively as he was good-natured—made him hardly able to await the moment when he could enter the carriage with the count.

"Something hurts me, here!" he cried angrily, when I buttoned his coat, putting his hand to the ring. Afraid, lest in this manner he might himself betray what I had done, I quickly cut open one of the folds, that the pressure might not be so great. If the count had discovered my secret, it would have gone hard with me. But I could not act otherwise. To my great astonishment I saw that post-horses were put to the count's travelling carriage. Some minutes afterwards he entered it with the child, and I have never seen the boy since. What has become of

him I know not—for on the next morning I left with the countess and thyself, following the count, who, it was said, had gone on before. Three days afterwards we met him at Cologne. He was silent and I did not dare to make inquiries. Thence we travelled into Holland, then to England, because existing circumstances made an Italian tour hazardous. It was three years before we returned to Russia. Thou wast now regarded as the Countess Feodorowna Dolgorow, and as such thou wast brought up. The ring, my dearest child, which I, at my departure, prayed thee never to part with, but to keep always in memory of me, is thy mother's wedding ring. By it thou mayest some day, perhaps, find thy brother. I know of nothing more I have to reveal to thee.—But I adjure thee keep these secrets faithfully, and do not impart them even to thy foster-parents—for I am afraid their revenge would overtake my still living brothers. No mortal but thyself and pious father Gregorius are cognizant of these things, and his lips are sealed by the sacred inviolability of the confessional."

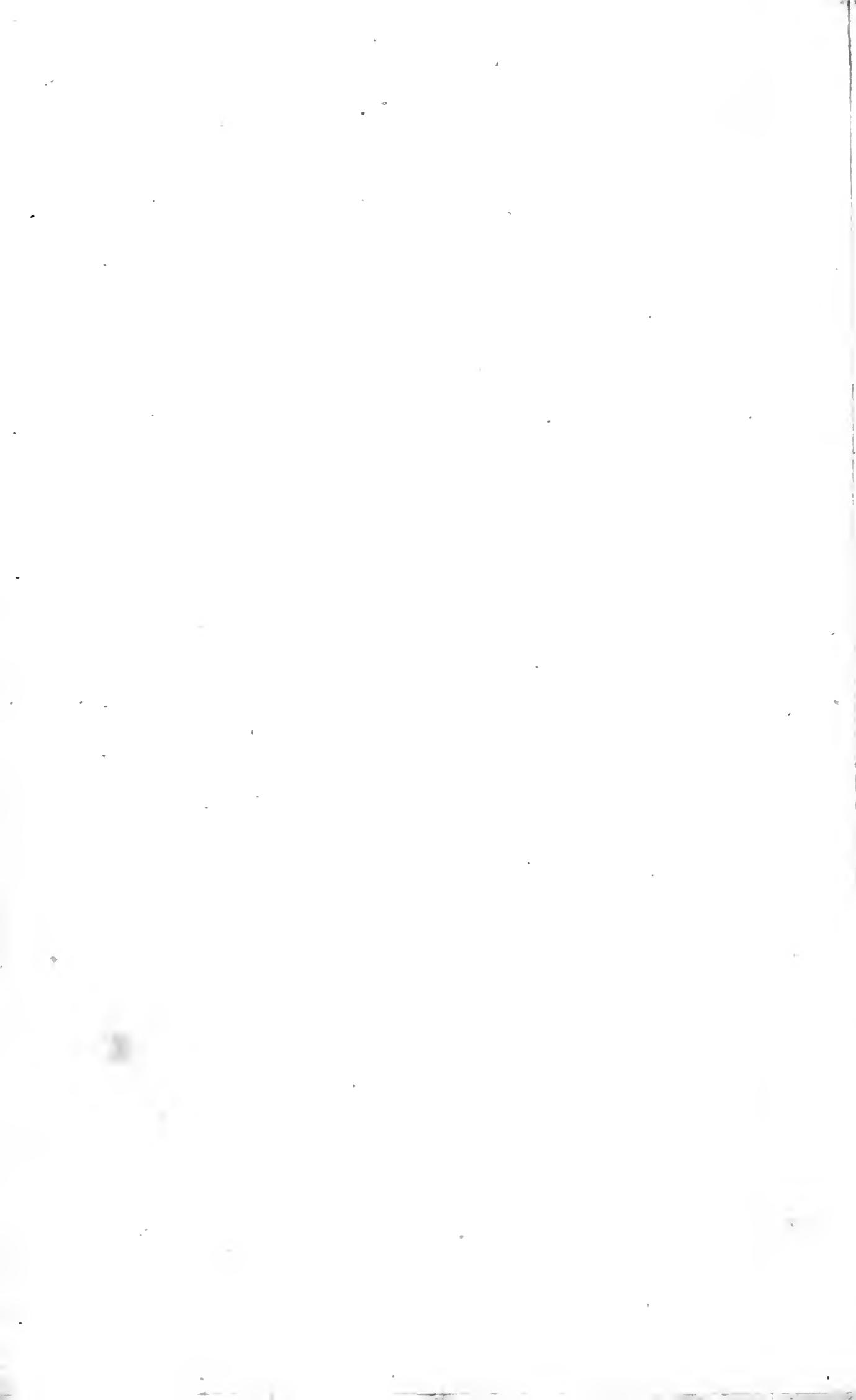
"Now farewell, my dear child! Forgive me, whatever wrong I have done thee, for the sake of that love which I always entertained for thee. Mayest thou be happy on earth as thou art good and beautiful; then thou wilt not shed so many tears, not pass so many anxious and restless nights as I have endured. Thy three-score and ten years old faithful nurse,

RUSHKA."

CHAPTER XLVI.

FEODOROWNA was thrown into the greatest excitement by the perusal of this letter. In her consternation she could form no resolution. Now she wanted to call Gregorius, now run down to her parents, and now again disclose everything to her husband. She gazed with tear-bedimmed eyes upon the portraits of her parents. "Oh, how charming the features of my mother, how noble and manly those of my father!" The sight of the unknown departed penetrated her soul with a softening emotion. "Oh, you would have loved your daughter now truly?" she sighed, "alas! now I know why I was sacrificed." For a long time she stood irresolute, painful thoughts lacerating her heart. Finally she rung the bell and ordered Jeannette to call Father Gregorius. He had been waiting in the antechamber. "Oh, my father, my preserver, what shall I do?" she exclaimed, raising, as he entered, her hands.





He felt Rushka's ring on her finger. "This is the only token," she said, "by which I am to recognise my brother. Alas, and but a short time ago, I was near losing it forever! But God watched over me! It happened—O forgive me—I was about to trouble you with a silly story, and at this time, when moments are so precious. What is your advice, my father? I am no longer Count Dolgorow's daughter, I am no longer bound to sacrifice myself for his sake."

"The sacrifice has been made by thee," interrupted Gregorius wildly, but with holy earnest. "Thou art the wife of Prince Ochalskoi, the indissoluble band of the Church has united you, and this band death alone can annul."

"Oh heavenly mercy!" exclaimed Feodorowna—"nor even when extorted by fraud and falsehood!"

"Not even then, my daughter!"

"Then let me be styled his wife, but never shall I be such until the brother of whom they have robbed me shall be restored to my sight. Alas, why did not the light of truth break one day sooner upon this black tissue of deception, before I was irrevocably fettered. Father, you could have saved me from this abyss, but your iron tongue remained mute!"

Exhausted, she fell upon a seat; her arms fell at her side. Gregorius approached her, took her gently by one hand, while with the other he pointed towards heaven. "Vows are sacred, are inviolable, my daughter. The Lord blesses those who faithfully observe their solemn engagements. Reflect that the prayers of the dying, that fate——"

"How!" exclaimed Feodorowna passionately; "should the fear of a fresh imposition from him who robbed me of my brother deter me from demanding my most sacred rights? Rushka fears the fate of her brothers—must I therefore forever renounce my own good? No! I will confront Count Dolgorow and ask him, 'Where is my brother?' With a word he can restore him to me."

"Dearest daughter, thou art beside thyself, thou dost not know what thou wouldst do," replied Gregorius in a consolatory voice; "become calm and thou wilt act differently. How if Count Dolgorow should deny the truth of Rushka's confession? And must he not do so to avoid drawing down the worst consequences upon his own head? Or dost thou think that he who possesses courage to do the deed, would lack enough to defend it? What proofs hast thou against him? Will not his declaration receive as much credence as that of the serf, Rushka? Hast thou not been christened as his daughter? Did not I, myself, in this church, touch thy temples with the holy symbol? Oh, my daughter, subdue

thy overwrought feelings, for thou wouldst only heap sorrow upon sorrow! Thou wouldst gain nothing but the enmity of father, mother and husband, and cause contention, strife and confusion, without obtaining either counsel or credit for thyself. And canst thou forget the holy vows pronounced but a few hours ago? Is it thy husband who deceived thee? Canst thou refuse fidelity and obedience to him because others have done thee wrong? And was not this wrong accompanied by a thousand instances of kindness bestowed upon thee? Hast thou not been fostered with care? Were not thy foster parents the same as if they had given thee life? No, my daughter! do not forsake the path of humility and endurance which the Lord has traced out for thee. If there is any hope left to thee of ever again finding thy brother, it is to be found only in a resolution to bury the secret in uncomplaining silence within thine own bosom. And dost thou know whether thou dost not perhaps draw down misery upon his head, if thou shouldst ever demand that he be restored to thee? Conjecture how far away he may be from thee! Listen to the words of thy old faithful pastor, and promise him that thou wilt follow his advice, and as long as he shall still wander on this earth he will stand by thee in unshaken fidelity. And should the Lord call him home, his prayer shall ever in the other world entail the blessing of heaven upon thee."

The old man's right hand grasped both of Feodorowna's. Her breast rose convulsively in a violent mental struggle. "Well, then, be it so," she faltered. "That also is overcome. I promise to be silent. But," she continued, rising in a majestic attitude and pointing to heaven: "I swear, and may the Almighty hear my oath!—I swear from this hour unceasing search after my brother, and if I find him, no power on earth shall prevent me from pressing him to my heart and exclaiming: 'I am thy sister!'—I must now go down again; I can do it, for I am composed. Now leave me, my father; but come and see me once more to-morrow, before I leave this castle forever."

She stretched him her hand. Gregorius laid his right hand upon her drooping head, pronounced a blessing over her, and left in silence.

Feodorowna still needed some moments to collect herself. She was on the point of leaving the room when the door opened and Ochalskoi entered. In alarm, she involuntarily took a step backwards. But Ochalskoi with engaging softness approached her, and taking her hand, said: "Did I frighten you, my dear? You will certainly pardon me, if my love impels me to seek you. We have

missed you nearly an hour. I cannot blame you for withdrawing from the company, but you will understand that the same wish has actuated me. Feodorowna! the happiest hour of my life has arrived! I clasp the most lovely, the most beautiful of her sex within my arms. The wall of external circumspectness is now broken down; will you not lovingly, entirely be mine?"

While speaking these words he embraced her, kissing her pale lips and cheeks. Trembling, she could neither oppose nor respond to his tender words; silently she permitted the embraces to which he had acquired a right.

"If thou art willing, Feodorowna," he continued, "this is the moment of our auspicious union. We must resolutely snatch the fleeting moments of happiness allowed in these iron times. It would be cruel to retard them were it only for a second. Charming girl, you would not trifle? We are now in the sweet sanctuary of love, and no one will disturb us. Your mother herself told me to seek you. The guests have just left the castle. The peasants and servants alone, in their way, celebrate the day of our happiness with games and dances. I have already sent away Jeannette. Sweetest, it is only one short night we can steal from a cruel fate, which to-morrow demands our separation."

The anguish of her heart had deprived the unhappy girl of speech. Ochalskoi imagined that her silence proceeded from virgin bashfulness, that her quiet endurance was loving, yielding resignation, the feverish throbbing of her breast, the excitement of blissful emotion moved with increasing ardor; he pressed his burning lips to her pale countenance, his right arm held her closely embraced, while his left hand, as if in the officious dalliance of love, unloosened her rich tresses.

Feodorowna, with already ebbing strength, endeavored to extricate herself from Ochalskoi's embrace. He attributed her effort to the promptings of maidenly timidity—especially that the lights were still burning on the table.

"I understand thee, dearest," he whispered; "it is only in hallowed obscurity that the tender blossoms of love may be plucked."

With a quick motion he extinguished the tapers, and drew the fainting girl into his lap, at the same time seating himself upon the ottoman.

"The bridal chamber is ready, Feodorowna—thy bashful struggles are in vain. Now no mortal, no deity can any longer despoil me of my sacred right of culling this charming rose! Fly! thou timid roe, hide thyself beneath the soft, silken cover of the couch which is to receive us both—fly! but I shall follow thee—two minutes more, and we are forever one and united!"

Here he momentarily released the agonized girl from his encircling arms. She would escape from him, but she no longer knew what she did. Trembling, she staggered towards the door of the room—she opened it, but with a loud shriek, as she recoiled and fell senseless to the floor.

Ochalskoi, frightened himself, sprang up, for upon Feodorowna's opening the door, he saw her figure illuminated by a red glare; while a broad line of a reflected blaze darted into the room.

"Death and hell, what is this!" he exclaimed.

It was the flames of burning Smolensko, which had just broken through the canopy of smoke, that till now had kept them smothered. The fortress lay directly opposite the window of the bridal chamber, the curtains of which had not been drawn.

Ochalskoi raised the fainting Feodorowna, held her in his arms and tried to re-assure her! "Compose thyself, dearest! It is a terrible bridal torch which lights us to happiness, but it shall not frustrate our sweet conjunction! The time will come when the torch of revenge will be brandished in our hands!"

The eyes of Feodorowna remained closed. Ochalskoi knew not whether to call for assistance, or try alone to recover her from her swoon. Her death-like paleness was hidden from him by the lurid glare of the fire. The rosy tints of the evening aurora seemed to have suffused themselves over her pallid form. Ochalskoi's desires were but more fiercely kindled by the sight. "Thou wilt awake on my bosom, my sweet one," he said, half-whispering to her, half-talking to himself, wholly absorbed in contemplating her charms. "I do what I dare," he said in a faltering tone, as he took her up in his arms, and bore her to the bridal-couch.

With an unsteady hand he unfastened the belt of her dress, and the clasp at her waist, that she might breathe more freely.

"Feodorowna, awake!" he cried, imprinting burning kisses upon her swelling bosom; "or no, repose in this charming insensibility until thou art warmed into new existence by the ardor of my embraces!"

At this moment the report of three shots was heard.

"What was that?" cried Ochalskoi, springing up from his bride. Quickly he threw open the window and looked out. The confused cry of many voices, followed by the rattling of musketry and pistols, reached his ear. "Assault! treason!" he cried frantically. "Death and destruction, and at this very moment too!" After uttering this exclamation of rage, Ochalskoi rushed violently out of the chamber.

The castle was already in a state of inde-

scribable tumult. The servants and peasants had first been interrupted in their sports by the alarm bell which announces the conflagration. Then the reports of the shots were heard, and every one thought that the enemy was already within the walls of the castle. On the corridors, stairs and court-yards, even through the apartments, male and female domestics, musicians, peasants and peasant girls were running in the wildest disorder.

"Bar the door," roared Dolgorow. "Up with the draw-bridge! All of you run to the castle yard. Never fear! It can be nothing more than a blind alarm!" But while, by means of such measures, he in vain tried to restore some confidence and order, a peasant rushed in breathless, and cried:

"The enemy, the enemy! They are falling upon us! Let every one fly to the woods!"

Amidst loud cries and lamentations the frightened servants, peasants, and the girls ran out into the yard and garden, some to hide themselves, others to seek safety in flight. Others, again, ran out of the castle gate to reach their houses in the village. To draw up the bridge or to close the gate was consequently rendered impracticable.

Dolgorow in the greatest rage struck at the fugitives with his sword, thereby still more increasing the fright and confusion.

A troop of Cossacks now darted by the gate and cried: "The enemy! the enemy! Fly and set fire to everything!"

The tumult and confusion were now past description. No one could hear the other speak.

"It is in vain to offer resistance," cried Ochalskoi, who, meanwhile, had armed himself with sabre and pistols; "let me save the women. We may escape through the garden into the forest, which will afford us security."

"That gate at least shall be closed," roared Dolgorow, quite beside himself, "otherwise a shameful flight will be of no service to us."

Now at last his commands were followed by obedience; for a moment the entrance became unincumbered. Himself, Ochalskoi, and three intrepid servants quickly disengaged the chains with which the gates were secured to the wall, closed them, and drew the massive iron bars.

It was indeed high time, for just at this moment, Rasiniski, at the head of his lancers, came dashing down the hill, and the gate was barely closed ere the clattering of hoofs was heard at the draw-bridge.

Dolgorow and Ochalskoi flew up the stairs to the bridal chamber to save Feodorowna, while the countess collected her valuables, and whatever was most necessary in a flight such as this. The noise of the attack had aroused the unhappy girl from her swoon. She had already adjusted her dress—for hav-

ing now become indifferent to the greatest alarms, which she no longer dreaded, she had collected her most valuable property—consisting only of papers and the portraits of her parents. Quickly she threw her cloak around her, and at the side of her father and her husband hurried down the saloon, where the countess was awaiting them. As they reached the lower story, the assailants were battering so furiously at the gate that it every moment threatened to break down, and afford them an entrance. Nor were the fugitives able to gain the yard without much interruption and delay, for a number of the servants and inmates having recovered from their panic, were hauling together straw, hay, and other combustible materials in great quantities, wherewith to barricade the passage to the interior of the house. "We will cut them off from us by a rampart of fire," cried Dolgorow, discharging his pistol into the dry rubbish, which immediately caught. "Heap on, my men, let the smoke choke the dogs as they enter!" cried the enraged Russian. The servants, in their eager zeal, nearly extinguished the flame by the superabundance of materials. "That's the way, lads!" cried the count, "set the whole castle on fire, if we must leave it; we'll never bequeath it to our enemies."

Seeing that his order was executed, Dolgorow hastened towards the garden, through which Ochalskoi and the ladies were already flying to escape by the postern gate. In a few moments the servants also had overtaken their masters, and when they looked behind them, a black, thick column of smoke was seen ascending from the castle-yard.

"They will not stay long in those quarters," said one of the servants with a grin. "In every outhouse and stable there's a bundle of straw burning. It will light us on our way through the woods. I think it is only a pity we could not get the horses along."

"Silence," shouted Dolgorow, "our flight must be as much concealed as possible." All then pushed their way in silent speed.

The fugitives had not yet reached the outer wall of the park when the red flame shone brightly through the trees of the garden. They gained the open country through the postern gate, and hastened onward on a narrow post-path leading to the not distant forest. As they reached the edge of the woodland a small party of horsemen turned the angle of the garden wall at full gallop, in pursuit of the fugitives. These hurried in full run towards the woods, but with the swiftness of lightning the horsemen followed them, and before they had reached the wished-for security, balls were whistling through the startled air, and drawn swords brandished among them.

By means of two heavy logs which had quickly been procured, Rasinski had burst open the door of the castle. He was met on its opening by a dense stifling mass of smoke and flame. But the wind rushing in through the entrance, drove the fire on towards the yard and garden, and the burning straw, rubbish and hay, were also swept away by the violent draught of air; it followed that no artificial means were required to effect an entrance. The wind alone accomplished it in the space of two minutes, and nothing but some ashes and smoke lingering in the front part of the castle gave evidence of the origin of the fire. Rasinski immediately pressed forward with the men. "Guard every entrance—suffer no one to leave the premises! Boleslaus, ride with your squadron around the castle-wall to the left. Jaromir, you to the right. Bring all the prisoners here. Let none assault the village. The castle is our rendezvous for the present."

With these words Rasinski dismounted, and accompanied by the guide, Louis, Bernard, and several officers and soldiers, passed quickly up the stairs to search the interior. They passed without hindrance through a long suite of rooms, all the doors of which they found open, betraying the hurried escape of the occupants. Much disappointed, he finally stopped in the great saloon and vexedly exclaimed:

"Can it be a failure? I fear the flames of Smolensko have defrauded us of our prize, and have been the means of prematurely dispersing the guests of the wedding party."

The guide shrugged and replied: "It is not my fault, your honor, my information was correct. If the fortress had not been set on fire, we would have been in the castle before a soul had suspected, and the generals as well as all the other great folks been our prisoners."

"You have earned your reward—take it," replied Rasinski, throwing him a purse of gold, which the guide pocketed with eagerness.

"If we now only had some infantry and a couple of cannon," said Rasinski, turning to the officers, "I would not hesitate a moment, but immediately attack the enemy's rear-guard, and at least frighten them by the unexpected attack. But as it is, it would be folly to advance farther into the country. The patrols of infantry and troop of Cossacks which we saw in the village will, no doubt, have given the alarm, and a strong force might be sent against us, and as we have only a narrow passage to retreat by, our situation might become very critical. We must call in our scattered force and recross the river as we best can."

The officers all coincided in the opinion.

Boleslaus soon after returned with his men, followed by Jaromir. The latter brought in some of the count's menials as prisoners. He reported: "Close by the woods I overtook the fugitives. They were the inhabitants and servants of the castle, with some ladies among them. At a brisk pace we dashed upon them; some fled, while others attempted to defend themselves. By the light of the flames from the castle-yard, I observed an officer with a young lady in his arms trying to escape in the thicket. I quickly dismounted to overtake them. As I plunged through the bushes and approached him, he dropped the lady and turned. I called out to him to surrender, instead of which he fired at me, but missed. I instantly returned the shot; he fell; I was in the act of running up to him when some Russians threw themselves between us, pressed me back, and almost overpowered me. Fortunately I reached an open space, where my men could assist me. They saved me; and we made three prisoners. According to what they assert, the man I hit was prince Ochalskoi, who, this very day was married to the daughter of Count Dolgorow, the owner of this castle."

"I wish we had been successful in making that one capture," exclaimed Rasinski impatiently, "but I do not blame thee for it, Jaromir—thou didst more than thy duty. Fortune has not been sufficiently favorable to us. Let us now break up, lest she play us a worse trick."

The prisoners proving of no importance whatever, were released, with the caution that they would be shot if caught again. Thus Rasinski succeeded in hiding from them the way by which he retreated, for at the moment of crossing the Dnieper, an attack would have placed him in a fearful dilemma. Besides, he wanted purposely to leave the enemy in the opinion that he was backed by a strong force which had crossed the Dnieper during the night.

Thus the retreat began, the burning stables and outhouses being left to the flames. It was only when, having crossed the ford, and his force was passing along the other bank, that Rasinski noticed that Petrowski and Bliski, two of his best and most intrepid officers, were missing. He immediately sent back Boleslaus with a few men to search for them. It was two hours before the latter returned, and wholly without success. Two brave companions were given up for lost.

"Must we indeed leave these two braves to be sacrificed?" cried Rasinski, deep lines overspreading his brow. "Friends, let us hope still. Perhaps they have only lost their way and will find us by-and-bye. We will advance slowly and make signals occasionally. Here we are safe."

This plan was pursued; the soldiers gladly obeyed, for the probable lot of their comrades weighed heavily upon their minds. Sorrow and indignation filled their breasts; and in profound silence they wended their way along the banks of the river.

"Hark! What is that?" Rasinski said to Boleslaus, who rode by his side. "There is some noise over the river. It was like some one throwing himself into the water. Halt!"

"True enough, there is somebody swimming," said Boleslaus in a low voice; "shall we hail him?"

"Wait a little, until we can have a clearer view. We don't know yet. We are close upon the fortress; but hark!—there are two swimmers!" "Who goes there? Halt! Give the countersign!"

"Good friend," replied Petrowski, and all burst out into a shout of joy. In two minutes the missing braves were on shore.

"No nonsense!" cried Bliski jokingly, pushing back some of his comrades; "we are all mud and water from head to foot. By the gods, it was rather a cold bath!"

"Where's your horse? speak!" said Rasinski.

"Bliski saved me!" began Petrowski.

"Pshaw! let me tell the tale," interrupted the merry Bliski. "His horse stumbled and fell as we were riding back to the castle; three of those Russian rascals rushed upon him and wanted to plunder him. Fortunately I saw it and jumped forward. One of the dogs then struck my horse a blow on the nose with a bludgeon, so that he reared furiously and threw me down on the sand. All the better for that, thought I, as I quickly jumped to my feet. The rascals had not spirit enough to stand against two of us, but like the horses, ran off. We tried to reach the castle on foot in the hope that our horses might have followed the track of the others. But the people flying from the village intercepted our way. We had to go back into the forest, and cruised about there for some time, the burning houses of Smolensko being our guide. Suddenly we came to a wide road, which I immediately recognised as the highway to Moscow, for I have long been in Russia and am well acquainted with the country. Just as we were about leaving the wood, Corporal Petrowski, luckily saw a troop of horsemen approaching. We quickly lay down among the bushes silent as sleep. Hardly had the horsemen passed when we heard the rumbling of artillery. There were at least a hundred pieces of cannon and ammunition carts, besides a great number of other wagons. Then came infantry—in long closed lines, then again cavalry—in short, a whole corps were passing by us for over an hour. Finally the field again became clear,

we arose and looked around; for some time we followed the road, then turned to the left and luckily reached the river."

"Although Rasinski was highly pleased to see his men safe, yet Bliski's narrative had awakened his thoughts to another point. His suspicion that part of the garrison if not the whole had left the fortress, had now become almost a certainty. He resolved therefore to attempt entering the town by the water-gate which was accessible for cavalry, and there perhaps be the first to enter the place. He commanded all to preserve silence and to keep close to the margin of the river. Thus he reached the first houses, without having encountered even a sentinel. The day was just beginning to dawn when he entered the streets. No sound, no trace indicated that a human being yet lingered among the half-ruined heap of stones. On turning into a cross-street, Rasinski with surprise saw cavalry approaching to meet him. They belonged to Prince Poniatowski's division; in happy state of feeling greetings were interchanged, and both parties continued their way. Rasinski rode close to the main wall. Suddenly he detected a man cautiously creeping along in the obscurity. He thought it was a Russian, and called out to him in that language, but he did not reply, and tried to escape. In the hope that the man might perhaps inform him whether there were still soldiers in the fortress, Rasinski and some lancers set out in pursuit and soon overtaking him, they surrounded him in such a manner that he could not escape.

"*Vive l'Empereur!*" cried the brave soldier, levelling his musket at Rasinski. He then first recognised the French uniform, and was soon on friendly terms with the man whom he had taken for an enemy. He was a corporal belonging to Marshal Davout's corps, who had ventured on the desperate attempt of scaling the wall and entering the fortress alone. Thus the glory of having first entered the place became pretty dubious. The principal object was gained, however—they were within the walls.

Very soon after they convinced themselves that the Russians had left the town, and that, after destroying the bridges, they had retreated across the river, probably still occupying part of the town situated on the other side.

The sun rose; his rays fell upon a terrible scene. Smoking ruins spread in every direction. Heaps of corpses, bleeding and scorched, lay everywhere about. Some were seen stifened and blackened by smoke and fire scattered over the smouldering ruins. Portions of the bodies were entirely stripped of flesh; only the naked, calcined bones stared the gazer in the face. Rasinski commanded a halt so as to avoid uselessly choking up

the narrow streets already encumbered with ruins and heaps of bones, stones and ashes, while himself and Jaromir rode on to the fortress to gain a nearer view of the scene of destruction.

"A sad victory," he said to Jaromir; "it seems hardly worth while to employ such immense forces for the subjugation of a country where instead of towns and villages one finds nothing but the ashes. Even the spirited, thoughtless Jaromir, though accustomed to the terrors of war, felt a shudder creeping over him as he rode through this chaos of ashes and corpses. "Very possibly," he replied to Rasinski's observation; "and it is still more incomprehensible to me how this devastated land is to nourish the vast masses which overflow it."

"The wolf will have to fly to Poland or Prussia," observed Rasinski, frightened himself at the half-jeering tone of his voice, "for here he must starve.—Hark! Music!"

The French guards were just entering the town, the band striking up one of that nation's favorite airs. The merry sound in that hour and place seemed like the bitterest mocking. Rasinski backed his horse into an adjoining street to let the troops pass. The musicians played the Marseillaise hymn, the fiery strains of which always kindle the highest enthusiasm in every French heart, and call the gleam of courage into every eye. But at this time they spoke in an unknown tongue to the experienced warriors. Deep earnest was expressed in their features; the eye was firmly fixed upon the destruction around them, and the eyebrows contracted with a vexed disappointment."

No trace of despondency could be traced on the rough, sunburnt faces of the warriors, neither did a ray of joy appear in their faces, decorated as they were with broad scars, but with proudly erect, but gloomily furrowed brow they marched on over the corpses, bones and glowing ashes—resembling an approaching thunderstorm in their mute, iron-like inflexibility and power.

And now came the Emperor on his white Arabian charger. His scrutinizing eye penetrated everywhere, without however stopping his animated conversation with Count Lobau, who rode at his side.

"The Emperor looks just as on the parade at Dresden," observed Jaromir in a low voice, but yet in a tone of surprise.

"That is his manner," replied Rasinski; "always the same in storm or sunshine. But let us follow; I long to know what will be his next movement. Perhaps he may throw business enough on our hands."

With these words he and Jaromir dashed across the smoking ruins past the lines of the marching troops, to join the general's staff,

with which the Emperor was inspecting the fortress.

CHAPTER XLVII.

"HANG me if I'm not tired of this life," said Bernard, throwing a heavy bag from his shoulder, while Louis assisted him. "For myself, I would never have travelled the weary and dangerous road into the robber den of these Mougiks, but my poor emaciated roan must at least for once have something better than green oats and stubble."

"Thou hast been fortunate," replied Louis; "we did not find even that. Everything is desolate and waste—all the villages burnt and abandoned. I should like to know what will be the end of all this?"

"Never mind. It is true we are embarked on the wild ocean; but we have a Columbus on board, with a compass that will guide him for a long time to come. But help me to feed the horses; I cannot possibly let the poor animals wait."

"Willingly," replied Louis.

"It is well," said Bernard, pouring the oats into the haversacks and hanging them before the hungry beasts; "it is well we are here by ourselves, and have at least this old barn for a stable, in this rough rainy weather. If we were in the open field we would have as many uninvited guests as there are flies round a dishful of cream. Look how the poor devils relish it! Ah! my good fellows, such oats are like an oyster supper to you."

While both were eagerly engaged in the pleasant occupation, Rasinski entered unobserved, on his way back from head-quarters.

"Upon my word," he said, "you feel as rich and fine as if in the stables of St. Cloud. Where did you find this treasure?"

"Good morning, colonel," said both the young men, wheeling round.

"Good feed for once, sir!" continued Bernard. "I had been listening to the dragoons; they had brought in some oats from the forest over there. Aha! thought I, there may perhaps be a few more of the same sort. Like a keen-scented terrier I followed the track of their clumsy boots, and soon came to a village which eight days ago might have contained a dozen houses, but now musters only a dozen scorched chimneys. On one of the hearths the fire had gone out too soon—one half of the hut was still standing. I crept in over ashes and coals, and in a dark corner I found this bag, which the dragoons either had overlooked or hidden away."

"Smart as ever!" said Rasinski gaily, but

with a troubled expression, at which both were struck.

"Lucky, only tolerably lucky," replied Bernard.

"Louis, for you I have a letter, and important news for all of us. To-morrow we shall at last have a battle."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Bernard, with a joyful animation.

"At last!" said Louis, absorbed by the news of the final arrival of letters from home, which for weeks he had been expecting in vain. While he opened them, Rasinski slightly touched Bernard's shoulder, and winked to him as he glanced at Louis.

Bernard did not understand what he meant, but kept silence as he looked at Louis attentively. The latter stood reading in violent emotion: he turned pale, and large tears ran down his cheeks; he covered his face with one hand, with the other handed the letter to Bernard. The latter seized it with warmth, while Rasinski consolingly laid his hand upon Louis' shoulder, and looked at him with a heart-felt sympathy.

"My mother—my mother! Read yourself!" was all that Louis found strength to utter, as he tendered the letter to Bernard.

"I know it already," said Rasinski; "I knew it from my sister who sent your letter enclosed."

For some time all three stood absorbed in gloomy reflection. Bernard first broke the silence.

"Let us go," said he, "over to the huts where Jaromir and Boleslaus are in quarters; on the eve of battle, we must at least have one more meeting. But is it to be a battle in earnest?"

Rasinski shook off his gloomy reverie and replied: "In earnest? Yes, as surely as the heavy stroke which has smitten our friend!" He passed his hand twice across his brow, painfully, as he added: "Kutosow will fight to-morrow—there is no doubt of it. The Emperor has already reconnoitred the battle-ground. Yesterday was but the prelude. The seventh of September is destined to be distinguished in the records of history."

"It will be a red-letter-day in the almanac then, and blood-red too, I think," replied Bernard. "Well, all the same to me: the greater the harvest death mows, the more calmly I will look on it. What more tiresome than the long catalogue of deaths in a great empire summed up at the end of a year? No battle is so murderous as a year in the quiet course of time." Thus saying, the two friends, saluting their colonel, left the spot.

They ascended a small eminence together, from which they overlooked the whole field, now covered with men and horses. The foliage had already assumed the hues of

autumn, the birch and beech trees were already scattering their leaves upon the turf; every green thing had withered and changed its attire; the heavens hung colorless in leaden dulness above the fields, chilling gusts of wind now and then whistled through the denuded branches, and the atmosphere felt thick and humid.

While they gazed upon this moving platform Jaromir and Boleslaus came up. Rasinski had informed them of the death of Louis' mother, as contained in the letter. With much sympathy they approached to evince their affection towards their mutual friend. The youthful Jaromir did not repress a tear. Boleslaus manifested his feeling in silence.

They went down the hill together to lay themselves down by the watch-fire before Rasinski's hut, in which the latter had ordered all his officers to assemble, it being the custom to pass the evening preceding a battle in company together.

The sun had set; since noon the orb had been hidden behind dense and black clouds. The night air blew very sharp, so that even with the fire and their heavy cloaks, those seeking repose were unable entirely to exclude the chilling blast. The whole day had passed in a gloomy, death-like silence, as if in tacit forecast, by both armies, of a desperate fight. Thus also passed this night.

The grey of dawn already began to appear when the sudden report of cannon from the enemy's lines interrupted the torpor and silence without and within. All sprang up, questioning and listening. At such an hour, and under such circumstances as the present, the firing of a gun is invariably the signal of some important event; every one looked to being prepared for whatever was to follow. But this time the expectation was foiled. It was ascertained in a few minutes that the shot had been fired upon a group of horsemen composing Napoleon's suite. The Emperor, driven by impatience and fear that the Russian army might again by a silent retreat during the night destroy his hopes of a battle, had mounted his horse, and under cover of the dawn proceeded once more to examine the exact position of the enemy. To his great joy he was reassured that the day of battle had arrived, for he discovered the long lines of reserves spread over the field, the immense quantities of ammunition and wagons lining the road coming from Moscow, and the formidable fortifications within the enemy's position.

Half an hour after the firing of this solitary shot the proclamation of the Emperor was issued. Rasinski received it by the hands of an aid. He immediately assembled his men around him, and by the smouldering blaze of the camp fire he read as follows:—

" Soldiers!—The day of battle you have so long wished for has arrived! Victory is in your hands. It is necessary to us. It will secure to you abundance, safe winterquarters, and a speedy return to your homes. Behave yourselves as at Austerlitz, at Friedland, at Witepsk, at Smolensko; so that your remotest descendants may with pride say of their ancestors: 'He fought in the great battle under the walls of the Moskwa!'"

These brief sentences sank deep and stirring into the hearts of the warriors. An exalted enthusiasm flashed from every eye; and when Rasinski drew his sabre and raising it high in the air exclaimed, "Vive l' Empereur!" the cry of inspiration burst forth from a thousand tongues, re-echoing loudly through the air, even into the ranks of the enemy.

The exigencies of the coming day demanded great exertion; Rasinski therefore ordered his warriors to court repose, that the day might find them fresh and invigorated. To keep up the spirits of the officers, and especially to divert Louis, he proposed an excursion through the encampment of the guards towards the imperial tent, erected not far from the bivouac of the cavalry.

They soon reached the large quadrangle which the guards for more effectual security had formed around the Emperor's lodgment. The sight of these picked and well-approved warriors, among whom scarcely a brow was seen without bearing honorable scars, or a breast without the insignia of honor and bravery, was calculated to inspire an ambitious mind with an ennobling self-confidence. Even Louis became erect and attentive, despite his melancholy, as he passed along the lines of these heroes. Bernard, more excitable, felt quite transported.

"A whole gallery of originals!" he exclaimed, turning to his friends; "I could find sketching here for ten years to come. What a study of heads! Look only at that grenadier cleaning his gun! With what earnest does he examine his weapon!—it is seen in every lineament of his countenance; he regards it as a sacred companion. Look how he catches the reflexion of the fire, and contemplates himself in the polished barrel, as if it were a looking-glass! The old boy may well look at himself. He must be pleased with that broad scar parting his eyebrows. Now he has finished his task; he gives a few grips and takes aim. In imagination he has his man marked already. Look too at that bewhiskered serjeant there dressing his bleeding forehead! How indifferent he acts! That brow of his must be used to scars! It is covered with hieroglyphics, probably engraved by some Mameluke sword at the pyramids. That forehead of thine is no less than an album! Whoever has left his con-

tribution there will no doubt dwell in thy memory, though hardly in the character of a friend. See that fellow yonder shaving himself, and as careful and smooth as if he were going to a Sunday's pic-nic at the Barriere de Neuilly or the gay wine-shops of St. Denis, where grisettes are so plenty. I believe this fellow does not know any difference between figuring in a *francaise* with his sweetheart and storming a battery in the front rank of his regiment. He has music at both frolics. I will bet that he feels certain of entering Moscow to-morrow. His whole physiognomy is an exclamation of 'Vive la bagatelle!' though he appears old enough to tell a tale about Marengo and the bridge of Arcole. Success to thee, honest friend!—be to-morrow as merry as thou art to-day, and go to thy supper humming the *carmagnole* just as much void of care as thou art now."

"But I have seen these same warriors in quite a different humor," replied Rasinski; "however animated the camp may appear to the novice who examines it for the first time, those acquainted with it for years look upon it with wholly different optics. You may read resolution—fortitude to meet even the worst in the faces of these men; but you find no longer that buoyant confidence, that burning desire for conflict and victory which formerly illuminated their faces on the eve of battle. Look, there is the tent of the Emperor. What can be the cause of this crowd pressing towards it?"

Soldiers were seen hastening in great crowds towards the tent and gathering around it in a mass. Those returning looked joyous and conversed with much animation. Exclamations of glad surprise escaped from the dense crowd.

"What is the matter there?" asked Rasinski of a grenadier coming back.

"The matter, my colonel? Something very beautiful and pleasant! A child, a charming child! The son of the Emperor! Yes, my colonel, it is a beautiful picture! I am also a father. I have a son only eight days older. I cannot have his portrait sent after me, but I have it in my heart. The rogue sits here, (pointing to his breast, which was decorated with the cross of the legion of honor,) so faithfully counterfeited that I would no other. Only go, my colonel, and see it yourself!"

The soldier, garrulous from joy, was forced aside by the living stream. Rasinski and his companions forced their way towards the tent. The crowd was very great. All they could make out from the distance was, that close by the Emperor's tent, and under the guardianship of two bearded grenadiers, there was a portrait of the King of Rome exposed to the view of the army.

"There is to me something very touching in this," said Louis to Bernard; "that in the midst of warlike preparations, not only the chieftain but also the loving father appears, and that he thus lets his braves participate in his joys."

"Yes, yes," said Rasinski, smiling, "he possesses great insight into human nature. He could not remind his bearded heroes in any better way of the happiness of home than by such a reminiscence. Now every heart beats for the fatherland—for *la belle France*—where are left behind, by one his children, by another his young wife, who perhaps meanwhile has become a mother, by a third his merry sweetheart. There is no other road to Paris but through Moscow. That they know well. Like enraged lions they will fall upon all who would obstruct their passage."

"I should think," observed Louis, "that just such reminiscences would tend to sadden their hearts and make them hate a war which forces them far away from all that is dear."

"Justly," replied Rasinski, "except on the eve of a battle. Fatigue the soldier endures with difficulty—danger he meets cheerfully—he would rather venture than suffer. The time of toil is now over; now comes a brief interval of danger: this he goes to meet gladly; for he entertains more hope of gain than fear of loss by it. Show him only victory as a sure prize, and he would not hesitate to storm hell itself! But it must be made sure to him. His articles of faith are: victory, peace, and a speedy return home. Excite his feelings by holding out the last, and you need not fear for the two first."

"Good evening, count!" said a welcome voice—Colonel Regnard's. "It is pleasant to meet a friend once more to-day. To-morrow vain inquiries will be made after many. I think the battle will do honor to the dispositions taken. One does not march eight hundred leagues for the sake of an affair of outposts."

"Till now we have not had much of anything else," replied Rasinski.

"Every kind of fruit must have time to become ripe, count. In Russia the harvest comes later than with us. Mark me, to-morrow the scythes will be busy. The Russians are this time in terrible earnest."

"Is there any sure information of it here?"

"There is no longer a doubt. I have just heard the report of a deserter. Old Kutosow, assured of our intention to attack him, resolves to stand his ground like a man. And with reason; for the Russians are prepared for a decisive struggle, and have deliberately devoted themselves to death or our overthrow. Did you hear in their camp those strange strains of music, or observe their

movements when they were paraded under arms?"

"I did; and what does it mean?"

"It was the oration preparatory to the wedding which we are to celebrate. The old prince, accompanied by the priests and archimandrites, went in procession through the camp. They carried a sacred image, which they have saved from Smolensko, through the lines of the army. The Russian worships this as a miraculous and protecting relic. His religion fills him with fanatical courage. His priests have consecrated him for the battle: whoever falls is secure of bliss in another world. They have been told:—'You fight to-morrow for the altars of your God; you must protect your holy city of the Moskwa, which the enemy otherwise will destroy—you must save your wives, daughters, and sisters from dishonor and bondage.' Such words take effect. The Russian longs now for the martyrdom of falling before our balls. I have read the proclamation also, but it is not exactly flattering to us. I assure you it would be difficult to excite the fury of a bulldog to a degree equal with that which old one-eyed Kutosow has inspired in his soldiers. To me the affair looks infernally serious. To-morrow, depend upon it, we shall find the enemy on his own ground, and *perhaps after to-morrow too*. An iron wall is not so easily overthrown. Fanatics are tougher than iron."

"What! You have doubts about our victory, Regnard?" exclaimed Rasinski.

"Not at all! But it will be a bloody one. By to-morrow night, twenty or thirty thousand men will probably bite the dust, and lay side by side as peacefully as they have, during the day, furiously assailed each other. Peradventure we be among the number, colonel, let us here bid each other farewell, for I must back to my corps." He extended his hand to Rasinski, who shook it cordially.

"Farewell, gentlemen!" Regnard said, turning to the others. "I hope we shall see each other again on the field or in Moscow."

With these words he disappeared in the crowd. Hardly was he gone when Petrowski quickly approached and handed Rasinski a sealed despatch.

"We must get back," he said, after having read it. "There are many dispositions to be made during the night. Come, friends, there is no time to lose."

They again reached their encampment. Rasinski ordered the fires to be extinguished and the men under arms. An adjutant soon afterwards brought an order to march. The regiment set itself in motion. While riding it was observed that all the fires of the French had been put out, or only emitted a few faint sparks. In the Russian camp, on the contrary, they were burning high and bright,

creating a widely-spreading and starry amphitheatre along the dusky horizon.

The march was a short one, and in direction of the centre of the army.

"Halt!" cried Rasinski, as they reached the broad base of a hill. To the right the ground was covered with bushes which farther down merged into the forest. Heavy masses of cavalry seemed to be collected here. About eleven o'clock they had taken a final position. Rasinski ordered his men to dismount without unsaddling their horses. The men took up their couches on the ground. Mute, eager expectation quickened the pulsation of every heart. Sleep came reluctantly and late; but finally, bodily exhaustion overpowered mental excitement, and notwithstanding the chill autumnal night, the hardy warriors were soon buried in the profoundest slumber.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

AND now dawned the eventful morning of battle. The sky was clear. Here and there the early mist rested on the deep sunken bed of the Kalotscha and a few other rivulets intersecting the field, but the fresh morning breeze quickly dispersed it.

The sun rose behind the sombre tops of the pine forest, and threw his dazzling beams over the field where the masses of the French army were already drawing up in array. The interminable lines of bayonets glittered in bloody red, the gilt eagles gleamed brightly, and the full counterpart of the sun was reflected from the burnished armor of the cuirassiers.

"It is the sun of Austerlitz!" cried the emperor, who, having taken his station on a hill on the left flank of the cavalry, and close by a redoubt stormed two days before, pointed with his finger at the blazing orb.

Rasinski and several other commanders had rode up the hill, in order better to overlook the battle-field. He had halted so near that he could hear the Emperor's words. The generals to whom they were addressed made no reply.

Louis and Bernard, who had followed Rasinski, halted close behind their chief. They too heard the loud exclamation of the Emperor.

The batteries, which, during the night, had taken up a position too far removed from the fortifications of the Russians, were now seen advancing to occupy the more proximate hills. The enemy did not take advantage of this favorable moment. It seemed as if, in this war, where he had ever acted only on the defen-

sive, he did not wish to be the first to shed blood even on a battle-field of his own choice, but would rather even now leave it to the option of the aggressor.

Suddenly the deep roar of artillery is heard on the left. Smoke and dust are seen rising near the village of Borodino. The solemn silence is broken—the black magic veil of fate is torn—the lightning descends with destructive energy.

The hand of destiny lets loose the iron wheel of its decrees. It rolls onward in ruinous grandeur, crushing whom it may. No power can now grasp its spokes and check its progress.

The Emperor's orders fly through the field. Instantly every hill belches forth its thunders. Smoke and flames burst from their summits. The castle shakes; the air vibrates with the terrible concussion. Like a river of hell breaking through its banks the black stream of smoke rolls across the expanse. The bloody orb of the sun can hardly pierce through these floating darknesses.

The battle now extended over the whole plain. Not far to the right of the spot where Rasinski halted beyond the reach of the guns, were three of the enemy's redoubts, which from their yawning jaws vomited their iron messengers of death among the advancing troops.

"Marshal Davoust will lose many of his men," said Rasinski, as he observed that general's columns deploying on the plain to storm the terrible redoubts.

Firm, compact, and in double-quick time these masses, which through severe discipline had become as one body, advanced upon the intrenched enemy. Thirty pieces of artillery accompanied them. They became so enveloped in dust and smoke that nothing could be seen of them.

With an eagle glance Rasinski scanned the battle-field. On the right wing Poniatowski had also commenced the attack. He debouched from the woods which covered his position and repulsed the enemy's left wing with decided preponderance, though slowly.

From the fiery volcano, which seemed to have swallowed up Davoust and his division, an adjutant now came dashing back at full gallop. He rode straight up to the spot where the Emperor stood—some hundred steps in advance of his first one, to get a better view of the field.

Nothing could be caught of the report of the aid; but immediately afterwards he was seen in company with General Rapp, riding at a rapid pace into the thickest of the fray.

In order to inform himself, Rasinski rode up to a transport of wounded officers passing near him.

"Well, comrades, how goes it? You are the first victims?"

"We shall not be the last," answered a captain, his broken arm hanging loose at his side; "the batteries up there play a perfect deluge. General Compans has fallen. The marshal is wounded?"

"Davoust?"

"Who else?"

"The battle goes hard, then?"

"It will be easier to count the living than dead!"

"Thanks, comrade—a speedy recovery," saying which Rasinski rode back.

The battle had now become general. Marshal Ney was now advancing with his three divisions.

A wounded general was now brought out of the conflict. It was Rapp, who, as soon almost as he got within fire, was struck from his horse by a cartridge ball. On this day this fearless soldier received his twenty-second wound. Slowly he was borne up the hill where the Emperor stood. Ney's divisions now deployed into the open field. Though galled by the enemy's destructive fire, they advanced steadily towards the heights. It seemed as if something decisive might come of this movement, and that the cavalry might also be called into action. Rasinski therefore remained close by his regiment, to be ready at a moment's warning.

The King of Naples rode up. His aids were flying round on every side. He collected the light cavalry to attack the enemy on the heights. Rasinski received orders to join him. The whole mass set out on an easy trot, to be nearer at hand in the decisive moment. Now the drums of the infantry beat the attack. They flew like lightning up the heights. The thunder of the artillery redoubled;—the whole plain was a sea of smoke, dust, and fire. It became impossible to notice who fell or who advanced. Suddenly the thunder of the artillery became mute—a loud hurrah resounded through the air—the redoubts had been carried by the valiant corps of Ney and Davoust.

With the impetuosity of a tempest the cavalry, led on by the chivalrous King of Naples, now traversed the battle-field. Dust and stones flew up high—the ground trembled under the shock of hoofs—the horses snorted—the dreadful din deafened every ear. Bernard threw a glance at Louis, who rode by his side. It was returned. Words were no longer audible.

The heights were reached in a few minutes. The Russian troops, expelled from their batteries, were mostly dispersed in the field and easily forced still farther back by the cavalry. But now suddenly the renewed roar of artillery was heard; and at the same

moment an avalanche of balls and cartridges burst upon the lines of the attacking forces. At the same time fresh forces were seen deploying in black masses on the heights skirting the destroyed village of Semenowski, which lay right before them. It was Prince Bagration, who, by the order of Kutosow, advanced with fresh troops to succor the defeated battalions. The heights all around were lined with cannon, and from almost every point their murderous contents were showered upon the advancing columns. Rasinski's regiment suddenly seemed to become the target at which all these batteries spontaneously directed their aim;—for such a quantity of balls and cartridges were hurled against their front and flank that in a few moments the greatest carnage and confusion arose. The murderous fire opened large gaps in the ranks—horses and men fell pell-mell—the loud cries of the wounded and dying filled the air and tortured the ear. It was as if they had been caught by a sweeping hurricane, from the manner in which death rioted in their lines.

Rasinski raised his sword on high, and with the whole strength of his voice shouted, "Advance!" The intrepidity of their leader infused fresh courage into the wavering soldiers, and they advanced to a desperate attack. But at this instant a hail-storm of grape-shot met them, so dense as almost to darken the atmosphere. Louis' horse was struck by a ball. The animal reared almost perpendicularly, made a side-long plunge, and threw his rider to a considerable distance. Bernard saw this, but it was impossible to think of giving assistance; for with an irresistible impulse the crowd bore him onward over the fallen.

Short as was the time, the dispersed Russian infantry had again collected and advanced in closer column. Death broke in upon the French upon every side. All bonds of obedience and order were quickly severed. The officers were lost in the dust and smoke or shot down;—no word of command could be heard—confusion now completely gained the upper hand.

Two squadrons of dragoons that had advanced farther, shattered by the terrible fire of grape and canister, turned, and in their flight tumbled among those of Rasinski's men who still remained. By this shock the Poles were partly borne away with the retreating stream—partly scattered asunder. In a few minutes the whole line of cavalry was annihilated or in flight.

Among the rest, Bernard was thrown out of line. Confounded by the overwhelming din and tumult, he looked around for Rasinski, resolved to share his fate. All at once he perceived some Cossacks coming up, and

before he was aware they had nearly surrounded him. He quickly turned his horse round, and then discovered the King of Naples in imminent danger of capture. He flies to his assistance, followed by others. They succeed! Murat shakes his waving plume as a signal. A cannon ball strikes his horse from under him; but he himself is unhurt. Resolved to die gloriously or to conquer, he flings himself into the redoubt, followed by the few who are with him. Bernard, springing from his horse, whose gaping wounds render him useless, follows, to share the fate of the rest. Two hostile regiments of cuirassiers in firmly closed ranks now come careering against the redoubt. Those within give themselves up for lost, when Marshal Ney appears with his rallied infantry, for the second time, on the edge of the hill. The artillery galloping up on the left, with their iron throats open a breach in the moving wall of the approaching Russians; the infantry give a volley, and with fixed bayonets follow up the shock. The enemy pauses—wavers—his lines are broken, thinned by the destructive fire of artillery;—some retreat, influenced by an irresistible panic fear, while the more resolute are hurried away in the tumult, and the next moment the field is covered with fugitives. The victors press forward on every side; and it is only when they behold the safety of their commander secured, that they stop, breathless and spent, with their extraordinary exertions.

Bernard took advantage of the first practicable moment to look after the wounded left on the hill, and to search for Louis. Some field-officers who had fallen on the blood-soaked field had been already brought in. There was no time to bestow much attention on others. Although incurring the greatest risk, Bernard dared to explore the space which had been left free between the two armies, and where the fallen of his regiment must lie. A harrowing sight met his view as he passed over the field of destruction. The dead did not so much awaken his sensibilities as did the hopelessly wounded, calling out for help in their tortures, and whose misery he was unable to assuage. Shuddering, and with averted face, he passed them. They stretched forth their mutilated bleeding arms, they called to him in heart-rending tones. Impossible! He must away. Dead men and horses impeded his every step. One unfortunate wretch, lying on the ground in convulsions, seized hold of him, and like an iron fetter twined his arms around his feet. "Help me!—save me!—let me not perish here!" He groaned. He was a German. Bernard heard the accents of his fatherland! Could he repulse a countryman?—a fellow-soldier, who with entreaties embraced his knees, who was

writhing before him, his frame shockingly mutilated, and the entrails gushing forth from his body? Should he quench the last glimmering spark of hallowed life by a kick from his foot? In no other way could he disengage himself from those tight-clasping arms! Then he exclaimed, "Louis, God must help thee!—I cannot!"

With tears coursing down his cheeks he stooped down to the miserable man to take him on his shoulders and carry him to a place of safety; but the vice-like grasp with which the wounded man clung to him at once began to relax—the arms fell back unnerfed—the uplifted face with the starting eyes sunk to the ground—the terrible agony was over—life had fled!

A chilling shudder crept through Bernard's frame. He stepped tremblingly back and pressed his hands to his eyes. A voice at that moment suddenly calls out his name from a distance—a note as from the regions of the blessed strikes his ear. He looks up—it is Louis on horseback, who comes to seek the friend whom he has given up for lost! With winged speech he approaches—they are in each other's arms—tears of joy flow from their eyes! But there was no time to tarry. The roaring torrent of battle suffers no one to dally idly on its billows; they tear everything along with them. "Mount quickly," cried Louis. The next instant Bernard is seated behind Louis, and they hasten to the place where Rasinski is again rallying his men.

Jaromir and Boleslaus received their friends with exultation.

"You live! You are uninjured!" was the mutual salute. Full of joy, Rasinski rode up.

"Bring a horse here!" he cried, and immediately one that had galloped in riderless from the field was placed at Bernard's service.

During the few following moments, Louis recounted that after falling from his horse, though somewhat stunned, he soon recovered. He crawled away from under the animal, caught a horse running loose, and again joined the regiments, until the sudden shock of the retreating dragoons had swept him back along with the rest.

But the whirlwind of battle has once more set in. By order of the King of Naples the cavalry regiments are again brought together, to complete the overthrow of an enemy already shaken and riddled by the heavy cannonade. Rasinski rejoins the chivalrous brigades, commanded by Bruyeres and Nan-souty. These masses charge the foe and throw him back upon his centre. Innumerable corpses, the sacrifice of success, cover the battle-field. The brows of the hills behind

the village of Semenowskoi are still covered with formidable batteries, each piece incessantly disgorging its hail-storm of grape and canister into the valley. Victory balances and sways to and fro like the stormy waves of the deep. Every step in advance is purchased at the price of human life. Gore and bleeding corses mark the path of retreat. Finally the infantry, collecting all their energies, make a charge up the steep acclivities. The enemy's fire is silenced, and another interval of repose ensues.

Rasinski halted with his regiment in the hollow of a ravine sheltered from the hostile fire, while the infantry transferred the fight to a region impracticable for cavalry. Grave and silent, he rode along the line, calculating the number of the missing. A dark cloud overspread his brow, when he found that half his men only had been left unscathed by the deadly fire. Full one-third lay among the dead, the rest wounded. Yet the sun was only in the meridian, and the bloodiest work was perhaps still to come. An aid of the King of Naples now brought him an order to repair to the left wing, and with his regiment cover the artillery, who were advancing *en masse*. The officer, at the same time, rode with him to the top of the nearest hill, to point out the spot assigned to him by this command.

The battle had now extended far towards the last and strongest entrenchment of the enemy. Kutosow was drawing up his reserves, to commence the second act of the drama, with unabated courage and obstinacy. To defeat this, the Emperor now ordered the whole line of his artillery to advance and break up these concentrating masses. Rasinski followed after three batteries of heavy artillery, which took up their position at a somewhat advanced point—a point at which they might easily be surprised by the enemy's cavalry were not immediate protection at hand.

And now recommenced the work of slaughter. The din of battle heard hitherto was the distant grumbling of thunder compared with the convulsions of two hundred guns. The Russians were drawn up in long-extended columns on the opposite eminences. With fearful precision the balls struck into the very midst of these masses; whole lines falling, yet replaced by fresh rows of victims.

"They make an obstinate resistance," said Rasinski, who, from the place where he stood, was furnished with an excellent view. "But they sacrifice themselves in vain. Instead of taking their stand there, they should move farther back, or make a rapid advance. They will pay dearly for this error."

The regiment, for the moment, having no

other duty than that of looking on, Bernard, Louis, and the others, gathered around their commander.

"See!" exclaimed Jaromir, "how the blue sky shows itself through the gaps in that black wall, every time the balls strike it. They must be lunatics thus to sacrifice their best men!"

"But we are losing our time too, I fear," replied Rasinski. "If the Guards were now brought up to secure the advantages we have gained, the whole Russian army might be thrown back upon its right wing, and become wedged in between the Mosqua and Kolscha. I do not see how they could escape."

"The King of Naples, as I myself witnessed, when in the redoubt," remarked Bernard, "sent messages to the Emperor, soliciting the advance of the Guards."

"Marshal Ney, also," said Boleslaus.

"And he refused?"

"It seems so."

"That is unaccountable! Incomprehensible! He is at too great a distance from the battle-field. He should stand here where we are. He would then soon change his views."

"I cannot suppose," said Louis, "that a commander, such as the Emperor, should not have more valid reasons for refusing this request, than those advanced by the parties who made it."

"I can guess what may be his reasons," replied Rasinski. "We are certainly not yet so far advanced on either wing, as in the centre. But Prince Poniatowskoi is now, also, pressing forward; and the Viceroy has never yet fought without success. But is not that Regnard coming yonder?"

It was indeed he. With a bandaged head and arm he slowly emerged from the fight, accompanied by two of his men. Rasinski rode up to him.

"Well, how goes it now, friend?" he called out.

"With me infernally bad, as you see.—Still I have my life insured not to be taken off in this battle. I am only slightly wounded; but the uncommon fatigue and loss of blood have made me so weak that I can hardly keep my seat. Then bad luck, vexation, and the strangest anomalies are enough to drive one crazy!"

"What is the matter, then?" asked Rasinski, in deep earnest.

"How can you ask? Do you not see how the battle goes? It is plain the Emperor is Emperor no more, or rather he is Emperor, but no longer the General. He is said to be sick, shaken with the fever—nobody can understand him. Victory lies before him, and he who would once have leaped

into Charybdis to snatch the prize, now hesitates to stretch forth his hand and take it. Murat, Davoust, and Ney, have entreated him to send the Guards to their assistance. He has refused. They have orders merely to show themselves on the heights, that the enemy may take alarm. It is as if a demon of hell had assumed his shape to destroy us."

"But we shall conquer, nevertheless."

"True! How is it possible to result otherwise? I know what fighting is, but I never saw Frenchmen fight as they do today!"

"The enemy also does his best!"

"That he does! He defends himself like a wounded boar; but it is just against such a foe that the soldier is transformed into the lion. Farewell, friend! I must have my wounds dressed. I can hardly keep in the saddle."

The Colonel of dragoons held out his hand and proceeded on his way.

The battle still raged in terrible fury. It was now the chivalrous Eugene Beauharnois who had the most difficult work to perform. On an eminence equi-distant between the villages of Borodino and Semenowskoi, the enemy had fortified his position by a formidable redoubt, from which four-and-twenty pieces of ordnance incessantly poured forth a torrent upon the attacking regiments.

"There lies the victory!" Rasinski exclaimed, as he fixed his eye upon this point, against which both armies now directed their whole strength.

"That redoubt is the palladium of the Russians," he again exclaimed, his eye flashing fire. "But it must become ours. The Emperor will now evince to the world that he is still the general and tactician, as at Marengo and Austerlitz!"

Orders now came for Rasinski to join the other masses of cavalry, which were to charge the enemy's infantry, which, for the third time, had been rallied by the indomitable Kutosow.

The French troops were collected in a hollow, through which flowed a streamlet, and under shelter of the elevation of the surrounding ground. At the same time vast columns of infantry were seen unfolding their lines and marching up to storm the redoubt.

"I believe it would be easier to storm Olympus, than this infernal laboratory of the Cyclops," said Bernard to Louis, pointing to the redoubt.

But the columns were already advancing at a quick pace with fixed bayonets.—Then came a horrible crash. A deluge of grape poured its death-mission among the assailants. The high whirling clouds of dust precluded the possibility of distinguish-

ing who fell or who remained standing. But soon the eagles again glittered in their splendor, and with maddening breathlessness again the Frenchmen advanced. The devouring monster on the summit seemed to have become mute; but it was only to make more sure his prey. The column formed once more into a solid phalanx, it darted its fiery tongues from its four-and-twenty pieces, and a roar which shook the heavens and earth reverberated through the air. As the furious hail-storm rages over the field, and prostrates stalks and ears level with the ground, so did this scythe of destruction now mow down the French warriors. To all appearance one-half of the men had been swept away at one blow. The iron stream which rolled over them hardly gave them time to draw breath. The insatiable furies of carnage, wrapped in suffocating clouds, launched their hellish lightnings forth on every side. Unable to succeed, the attacking columns wavered, broke away, and dissolved in irregular flight. Fresh troops were led on to the assault; but with unabated fury the destructive stream from the redoubt covered the field. Corpses fell upon corpses, forming a rampart of flesh around this deadly crater.

The wings of the Russian army rested against either side of this redoubt. Impregnable as Gibraltar, they defied every effort. Their infantry contributed greatly to the destruction of the assailants. Murat sends two regiments of cavalry against these columns, to turn them and then storm the redoubt in front. But hardly are they within range, when death breaks their lines. A bullet stretches their valiant leader, Montbrun, on the ground. Those who see him fall halt and waver. Quickly General Caulaincourt dashes forward and takes Montbrun's place.

"Friends!" he cries, "we will avenge the fallen hero—this is no time for weeping!"

The King of Naples orders the whole combined mass of cavalry to advance. Two regiments of Saxon cuirassiers constitute the left wing—a Polish regiment joins them. Then follows Rasinski with his men, succeeded by the rest of the cavalry.

Slowly they mount until they reach the level ground. The word of command is given; the trumpet sounds; the mighty torrent rushes swiftly across the field; the thunder of the artillery is drowned by the heavy trampling of horses, and the war-cry of the Franks. A cloud of dust envelops them in the darkness of night. The flashes from the enemy's guns form a guide to the goal. Closely wedged, knee to knee, they push onward. Nothing surely can withstand the shock of this formidable body. The die on which hangs two imperial desti-

nies is thrown high in air. The play is for the mastery of the world. With terrible power the French cavalry rush upon the enemy's lines and throw them back into the plain. This sight rekindles the ardor of the repulsed infantry, which is promptly again put in motion against the redoubt.

With a piercing shout of rage the footmen advance. The iron death-missiles again pour into their ranks and carry off thousands. Forward they struggle over the mangled corpses of their comrades. The eagles fall. Forward! Their officers sink, struck by the death-hail. Forward! is the cry, that they may breathe their last on the field of victory. And they rush on, straight into the black thundering pit of destruction. The earth has become a raging ocean—all around the breakers roar—the abyss yawns, glaring on every side. Once more the sluices of hell open, roar, and hurl flames and death among the assailants. Their line lies prostrate. But "Forward!" is the cry of the remnant as they still press on.

On a sudden all is still. The thunder is hushed; the black curtain of smoke is rent, and a brilliant light strikes the darkened vision of these heroes. "Can it be? Does another wall of fire rise before us? No!—we hear the shout of friends—the gladdening cry of "Victory!"

It was the valiant cuirassiers who carried the redoubt; and proudly did the sun mirror itself in the burnished steel of those breast-plates which covered hearts of still more inflexible metal.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE formidable redoubt is taken. The intrepid foes are overthrown and defeated. But soon they are incorporated with the yet unbroken masses. The enemy seems to meditate a renewal of the contest. He is aware that he must give way, but he will not flee. With wrathful glances towards the scene of battle, he slowly retreats and takes up a new and secure position. His hills and his streams are to him powerful auxiliaries. There is no rivulet which does not offer its steep banks as a shelter to the son of the soil, and protect him against the pursuing enemy. There is no hill which does not answer for a fortress to form a fresh impediment in the way.

Thus it did not become the task of the light cavalry to increase the confusion. The

usual lighter after-play did not here succeed the more serious performance, furnishing booty and prisoners. The iron messengers of the artillery alone struck furiously the heels of the slowly retreating enemy, until silent, hallowed night gloomily spread her dusky mantle over the agonies and horrors of this eventful day.

Still Rasinski was ordered to cover the pursuing artillery, and protect them from the attacks of the cavalry of the enemy, that might turn about.

Now, when the curtain of night had been drawn around them, and even this last conflict was over, Rasinski rode leisurely back with his squadrons over the battle-field, in search of a fitting place for their bivouac. The profound obscurity did not permit them to distinguish anything clearly. The sky was overcast with lowering clouds, drawn together by the day's cannonade. A chilling, drizzling rain, driven by the rough autumn winds, dashed in the exhausted warrior's faces. To the terrible tumult of the day succeeded deep, gloomy silence. It was only from the agitated tops of the forest-trees that a hollow rustling was heard, while fluttering carrion-crows, already scenting their prey, kept up their disgusting croakings over the heads of the riders. The aspect of nature all around sorted well with the tone pervading every breast. Hushed silence sealed every lip.

Is this the feeling after a victory? thought Louis, with an inward shudder. His own fate at this moment appeared to him as a dark troubled dream, out of which he must awake. Trembling, he cast a backward glance on the path of his life, which from a gentle valley had towered to the dizziest heights, and now conducted him into the darkest abyss. A few months ago, when the vernal buds of a luxuriant vegetation opened on the sunny plains of Italy, his breast was yet filled with calm and silent happiness. He then looked soberly and placid upon life; though many dark clouds had passed over his head, yet he felt happy and contented in his limited circumstances. Then he built charming castles in the air, indicated by a peaceful future, remote from the turmoil of the world. He thought of Mary, of his mother, of their quiet domestic comforts; of the serious claims of the sciences, and of business which awaited him. He felt himself so very happy as a son and a brother. Even the wonderful emotions of his heart, called into existence by that charming, fascinating being, whom he had met at the foot of St. Bernard, brought only the smile of melancholy longings upon his lips. That which he had ever regarded as a dream, as a passing, vanishing

apparition, could not possibly strike any very deep root of sadness into his soul.

He knew grief only from contemplating the fate of his native country, which certainly cast some very dark shadows upon the background of his otherwise peaceful days, and that certain pain which often might be called a pleasure, arising from those unalloyed and vague desires and impulses which agitate every youthful breast. With these feelings he had ascended the hill before Duomo d'Ossola.

And now, on finding himself in the heart of Russia, on a battle-field covered with corses, drenched in blood—when he reflected that his beloved mother was sleeping far away in the silent tomb—that his only sister was left solitary and bereaved—that the image of Bianca had sunk into the gulf of eternal night—these were moments when, in convulsive agony, he would exclaim :

" Oh, that I could arouse me from this horrible dream ! "

As they rode, Bernard's horse stumbled and fell on his knees, so that the rider was well-nigh thrown over his head. " What is this ! " he exclaimed, pulling up the beast " I thought it was a body."

Bernard was right. They were crossing that part of the field where the Russian artillery had done the most terrible execution. Till now they had only traversed the ground over which the French artillery had step by step followed the enemy.

" We are now on the high-land behind Semenowskoi," said Rasinski ; " a great many dead must be lying here, and probably many badly wounded. Ride carefully, lest we chance to increase the sufferings of these helpless wretches."

This humane order it was impossible to follow, for now the number of carcases of men and animals covered the ground so thickly, that they came in contact with the horses' hoofs almost at every step.

" Let us turn to the left down in that meadow," said Rasinski ; " there death cannot have raged so fearfully. It will be something out of the way, but we shall reach our destination sooner than by being arrested as we are at every step."

As long as they continued on the ridge of the hill, the ground was still thickly sown with dead bodies.

" I am glad that the night hides from us this horrid spectacle," Louis remarked.— " Fancy may be stronger than reality, but still her vagaries could not be so shocking as the sight which daylight would reveal to us here."

The little band rode silently over the field of death. Frequently they fancied they heard groans and cries, but these expressions of

suffering were drowned in the rustling of the forest-trees, the heavy tramp of the horses' hoofs, the rattling of the sabres, or the snuffing and snorting of the heavily-breathing horses.

Every one breathed more freely, as they reached the lower ground where death had not found its victims so fully exposed. Following the course of the little rivulet, they passed the foot of the hill on which were erected the three redoubts against which Rasinski and his regiment had directed their efforts.

" Halt—front ! " he shouted. The regiment, or the handful that was left of it, now fronted the very eminence on which they had lost the full half of their number.

" Up there," said Rasinski to his devoted followers in his powerful voice, " there on that hill lie our brave and faithful comrades. Let us offer up our silent prayer for them."

With these words he took off his Polish zapka with the waving plume, and inclined his uncovered head. In deep solemnity the warriors followed his example. For some minutes a hallowed silence prevailed. The leader then resumed his erect posture and in a short gallop rode down the line. On the summit of a little elevation he stopped.— " Right and left wheel into circle ! " It was done. " Halt ! " he finally cried, and commenced : " Comrades ! this day has been bloody, but glorious. More than two-thirds of our brother-soldiers are missing in our lines. One-half of our own number have purchased the victory with their lives ; the others are lying severely wounded. We mourn over the brave ones who have fallen, but their loss must not discourage us ; it ought rather to heighten our zeal. Banish, then, all gloomy thoughts from your breasts. We have been victorious, and after a victory the warrior's face should beam with joy. The struggle is over ; only a few days, and the reward will be yours. Yes, my brothers, this is indeed a glorious day ; for although, during the battle, fortune was sometimes against us, you have fought like true sons of Poland—it is my pride to have been your leader."

" Hurrah for our Colonel, the gallant Rasinski ! " cried they all. Greatly moved, Rasinski returned a soldier-like salute. The trumpets then sounded, and with re-adjusted files, and in close order, the body proceeded on to the bivouac.

Soon a cheerful fire crackled and burned high. The projecting branches of the trees of the forest hard by were illuminated by its exhilarating blaze. Bernard, Louis, Jaromir, Boleslaus, and the officers whom the battle had spared all threw themselves on the ground in a circle with their colonel in their midst.

"Well, friends," said Rasinski, "it has been a toilsome day for us; do you know how many there are left of us? Three hundred and twenty-five, all counted. The battle has cost us three hundred and seventy!"

The officers regarded each other with sadness. They were no more than five in number. Seven had been carried from the battlefield severely wounded, eleven cut off by death, and of those who now sat by the fire none were entirely unhurt but Rasinski, Jaromir, and the captains Bernecki, Jelski, and Bernard. Louis had been somewhat bruised by the fall of his horse.

"I am grieved for all whom we miss," said Rasinski, "yet I may say, that one loss affects me more especially. It is that of our old friend Petrowski, this brave old man, who carried more scars than hairs on his head, but in whose breast still glowed the fire of youthful courage and patriotism."

"Ah! Petrowski is dead! And whereabouts did he fall?" asked Bernard.

"Up there by the redoubts, where we were repulsed, and where the most of ours met their fate. He would not turn, but was exerting himself to make his section stand their ground, when a cannon-ball passed right through him and his horse too. They fell, the one over the other. I saw it all, but it was impossible to assist him, being ourselves swept away."

"Might he not be among the wounded?" asked Louis.

"No, dear friend—I have received the report. And then I saw death too plainly stamped on his face. He lies up there.—Should we have time to-morrow, I will see if I cannot give a suitable burial to the old hero's remains. His comrades may then tell at home where lie the bones of this gallant Pole." Rasinski shook as if with the ague as he added, "But this only serves to unman us. Who knows what accident might rouse us from our slumbers during the night? let us enjoy a short season of rest while we can."

The wearied soldiers were soon wrapped in forgetfulness. But in the middle of the night, impatience and care tore Rasinski from his slumber. Wrapped up in his cloak, he passed through the lines of the sleepers lying around the fire. The watches alone were up and looking fixedly into the fire; they either thoughtfully or thoughtlessly stirred up the embers.

"What time is it, friend?" asked Rasinski.

"Midnight."

"Did you hear nothing? No report of cannon in the distance—no beating of drums?"

"Only dead silence!"

"Strange," murmured Rasinski; "we ought to pursue, and not give the enemy this

repose. But the victors are perhaps even more exhausted than the vanquished."

He bent his way towards a hill which commanded an extensive view. The battlefield lay before him, black and silent. As on the evening before, the fires shone in a bright semicircle in the Russian camp. Singly and expiring they burned on the ground on which the conquering army was encamped.

"This, then, is the fruit of so terrible a battle? The enemy mistaken in his position? To-morrow, perhaps, the sun will again rise as bloody? Only one such victory more, and we are lost!" He paced violently up and down. A confused noise of voices from a distance reached his ear. It was the well-known Russian battle-call, which sounded from the camp. "Would they risk an attack during the night?"

Meanwhile he heard a rustle close behind him in the bushes.

"Who goes there?"

"It is I," replied Louis' voice. "The heavy dreams would not permit me to sleep. I followed you, when I saw that you ascended the hill."

Rasinski laid his hand upon Louis' shoulder and sighed: "Oh, my friend," said he, "were you as experienced a soldier as I am, you would understand that victory is sometimes destructive. This war cannot have a happy termination. The Emperor is blinded. He does not know old Russia. He thinks to advance to Moscow, there to dictate a peace. And should he succeed in entering the old capital of the Czars, only just two days' march before us, he does not know that he will then only stand at the threshold of this gigantic Empire. The most fertile provinces are yet untouched. They have resources enough to nourish the flying inhabitants who live on this side of Moscow, while us the winter here will devour. And as yet we are not in Moscow. Do you see the bright fires of the Russian camp yonder—do you hear their war-cry? If they are resolved, if their leader has ability and strength of purpose, they will still give us three battles before we see the golden spires of that city shining in the sun. And then? When thousands and thousands have been swept away, how shall we keep the immense territory we have conquered? A boundary is set to every human power! Accustomed to the greatest successes, to realise the almost impossible, our great leader has overrated his strength and misunderstood his means. He must break down under the gigantic weight of his undertaking, which, rolling backwards, must crush him."

Louis was silent—he gave himself up to glowing meditations. Rasinski also remained silent, and stared into the darkness.

"Oh, friend," he finally added, and in a tone Louis had never heard from him before, "what if, in looking upon this field of destruction, the question is asked, why do these thousands bleed? Alas, you do not suspect the horrible picture of human misery that lurks behind the mask of ambition! I do not bewail the dead; they have found their rest. To fall in battle, is the fate, the glory of the warrior. But how many thousands, perhaps, lie here on the rack of unutterable suffering! This rough, piercing night makes us tremble with cold, although unhurt and refreshed. How then must it be with those who, with broken limbs, with mutilated frames, are abandoned to the influence of the cold, their wounds bleeding, while frost and fever alternately seize them? In agony they count the lazy hours of the night, until assistance shall be given to their misery. They think of home, of parents, from whom the iron hand of war tore them; the father sees before his eyes the image of his tender children, the husband the figure of his loving wife, the youth that of the weeping bride! Buried among cold corpses, surrounded by those who in the struggle of death curse themselves and their creator, they lie in horrible solitude or in still more terrible company, while every fresh minute pours upon them a new stream of horror and misery. Louis! He who sees the battle, only sees the smiling face of war. Look at the battle-field to-morrow and you will shrink back in dismay before the grinning face of the hideous spectre!"

Excited by his words, Rasinski here seized Louis' hand and continued "But see it you shall and must! You must know what a man dares to do for glory and his country. This sight will finish your education."

Exhausted, he threw his arms around Louis' neck, and rested his head upon his breast. He shed no tears, but his heart beat violently and his cheeks burned as if with a fever. Louis had no words of consolation, only the pressure of love for the man on whose manly power he had often already supported himself, and whom he now saw so overpowered. But it was only for a few minutes. Rasinski had soon recomposed himself; he rose and with melancholy friendship, said:

"My breast becomes calm like one in which the heart beats no more; now it is over: I have given freedom to the choking oppression—the dream is passed—I am my own master again. You will never see me weak when the moment of action claims firmness. I wished to trust my sorrows to the night alone: now the breast of a friend divides them, and you will help me to bear them."

Arm in arm they went down and sought repose with the rest.

CHAPTER L.

As day broke, an orderly brought Rasinski information that the Emperor intended to hold a review of the troops. At an early hour the regiment mounted and took its place in the line. Now, only had it become known, through the aids who rode to and fro, that the Russian army had commenced its retreat during the night. The king of Naples had gone with part of the cavalry to inform himself whether they would retire towards Moscow or on the route through Kalouga. A firm, rigid pursuit with the whole army, the emperor thought he could not ask of the exhausted and almost decomposed troops.

Arranged in a long line, the regiments crowned the crest of the hills, lining the battle-ground *now lying before them*. Like a dreary desert was its aspect, but they were too far distant to recognise one of the thousands lying scattered there. The army itself presented but an indifferent plight. The troops had collected around their eagles, but they looked neither gay nor proud of victory. Their uniforms were mostly black with the smoke of powder and dust, torn by balls and cuts of the sabre. Hunger, cold, too great exertion had exhausted the strength of these braves. The usually fiery eye looked dispiritedly from underneath the bushy eyebrow. A deep expression of seriousness was depicted on their wrinkled foreheads; it seemed to increase with every glance upon the bloody fields where thousands of their comrades slept. And these fields of death and blood were the sole trophies of victory which had been gained! Many regiments had dwindled to one-third their original number; a small band, they stood around their eagles, hardly numerous enough to defend them.

Thus they awaited the Emperor.

With earnest features he rode through their lines. He saluted the soldiers, praised their courage, promised rewards, promotions, decorations. The officers set up the cry: "*Vive l'Empereur!*" and the warriors joined it. But it was only the old custom—a duty of the heart—no free enthusiasm, which bravely and happily breaks through its bonds. And then, where the thunder of thousands of voices formerly resounded, only hundreds were heard—the lips of many were closed forever.

After reviewing the troops, the emperor turned his horse to ride over the battle-field. Many generals and superior officers followed him. Rasinski, and at his request, Bernard and Louis, also followed at some distance.

"See what grey clouds cover the sky," said Bernard to Louis as they rode slowly along by each other's side. "It is as if heaven itself were afraid to show a gay face on the scene."

A transport of wounded passed them. The expression of most of the sufferers was one of silent resignation. A few looked daring and wild, and as though they would raise themselves above their hapless fate, broke out into exclamations of pain. A very small number seemed to feel joy at having found assistance, or looked gratefully around.

Now they reached the first points around which death had raged violently. The ground being uneven, many of the wounded had crept hither to find a protection against the chill of the air. They were lying in holes in the earth, and trembling with frost and fever. The teeth of an old grenadier rattled terribly, but no sound of pain escaped him; he looked fiercely only from his deep sunken eyes at the passers. Louis would have dismounted to assist the miserable wretch, had not two of his comrades arrived with a litter, on which they laid him, and carried him away.

A few steps farther, Bernard, elbowing Louis, said: "Is not that pitiable?"

A young man with fair hair, in whose soft, almost maiden features, in spite of pain and misery, youthful beauty was still depicted, lay across the way, his dying eyes fixed on the comers. Low words of complaint seemed to stand on his half-opened lips; imploringly he cast his eyes upon some soldiers who were taking up the wounded near him. He seemed to murmur: "Oh, come, and help me also!"

Louis could bear it no longer. He jumped from his horse, approached the unhappy youth, and bent down to assist him. A grey-headed grenadier roughly spoke:

"Let him lie, comrade; he cannot be helped; you only lengthen his sufferings. How should a man with one leg and a crushed breast be able to make his way from this terrible country to France? Leave him, and help those who may still be saved? Wish him a good sleep, and go!"

The unfortunate sufferer heard the words which tore the last thread of hope without pity, and sighing deeply, he looked up in Louis' face. The latter's eye became dim. With compassionate interest he bent over him, and said:

"It is not so bad yet, friend; I mean to carry you up there—keep up courage!"

The wounded boy looked thankfully at him; he could not smile, so horribly had pain contracted his muscles, but a slight shade of hope lighted up his dying eye. Louis would have raised him at the instant, but the miserable soldier had still his knapsack at his back. The weight was too much, and he was obliged to desist. Bernard thereupon alighted to assist him. Both the friends stooped over softly to raise the helpless boy—his head fell back—*Ah! ma mère!*" escaped his lips, and slowly he sank down a corpse.

For a moment both stood appalled. They gazed on the body in mute bewilderment, then slowly remounted.

Shortly they were on the space where the conflict had been waged so obstinately the preceding day. Here the whole field was covered with corpses; but few wounded were to be seen, for as soon as the morning dawned, hundreds of soldiers had been engaged in getting them into the wagons. More horrible was the scene of death on which they now stepped. In innumerable masses, Russians and Frenchmen covered the field, for here the struggle had for a long time been undecided. Terrible mutilations appeared everywhere; the torn limbs lay singly around, or were carelessly thrown into heaps. During the wild struggle of death, the bodies of mutilated horses had fallen upon the dead and wounded, so that in the cold features of those found lying under the carcasses of these animals, the terror in which they had breathed out their spirit under the horrible burden was expressed. Broken helmets, cuirasses, guns and sabres shone among the bleeding heaps; pieces of broken cannon lay around. It was difficult to lead the horses through this terrible labyrinth without human bodies being injured by their hoofs.

The Emperor halted. With a keen eye he looked around. His glance passed over the scene of horror at his feet. He did not look at the field of death, but at that of battle, with the discerning ken of a chieftain. He seemed to wish to be alone, his suite was ordered by a sign to retire. They dispersed in different directions over the battle-field. Marshal Berthier alone remained at the Emperor's side.

Rasinski and his companions rode towards the place where yesterday he and his regiment had first got within fire. Soon the Polish uniforms were seen glittering around; they could be distinguished from afar by their brilliant blue color.

"Here I sought thee yesterday," said Bernard to Louis. "By the great cross of Nuremberg, I am glad to see thee now riding at my side."

"Could we only succeed in finding the body of brave old Petrowski, I should feel happier," said Rasinski, attentively casting his glances over the field, and looking closely among the dead of his regiment. "Hereabouts I saw him fall. But is not that Jaromir coming?"

"We are in march, Colonel Rasinski," exclaimed Jaromir, riding up. "Just now the order arrived. Boleslaus is already gone with the regiment. I remained behind to seek you. We take the road to Uliga, on which we are to reconnoitre the byways of the old road to Moscow, as it is supposed that

the Russians turned thither, to march upon Kalouga and Tula."

"Who brought the order?"

"An aid of the king of Naples."

"Did you find feed?"

Jaromir shook his head.

"Then the horses must starve."

"Some hay and half-rotten grass was all we could pick up, but we hope to get some provisions in the villages on the road."

"How are the men?"

"Refreshed, but not sufficiently; determined, but not gay. The victory is incomplete. They know that we have made only eighteen hundred prisoners, and after such a battle, we ought at least to have double that of thousands. The twenty-four heavy pieces of cannon, and some smaller ones, is all that is captured."

"And over seventy thousand killed and wounded!" returned Rasinski, gloomily.

"Counting both sides," replied Jaromir.

"A terrible victory! Forty-two generals have fallen, among them Coulaincourt and Montbrun. Marshal Davoust, too, is wounded."

"But not dangerously!"

Rasinski said no more. They had now reached open ground, and rode over at full speed to join their regiment and once more throw themselves into the roaring sea of belligerent strife.

CHAPTER LI.

On the fourteenth of September, the first body of the army's cavalry, among whom were Rasinski's, reached the "*Sacred Mountain*," from the top of which they saw, for the first time, the old seat of the Czars spread out before them in the valley. It was two in the afternoon. A brilliant autumnal sun broke through the thin clouds, passing over the clear blue sky. In a thousand different tints shone the numberless cupolas of the churches and palaces, which, glittering in gold and green, rose high above the other buildings of the city. From the forest of spires, the Kremlin rose like a crowned head, while crowds of pigeons circled, fluttering their brilliant wings in the sun's rays around the spires of the towers.

An involuntary exclamation of gladness and awe burst from every breast. "The cry of "Moscou! Moscou!" resounded everywhere. Like a golden prize for the victor—like a brilliant crown for the valorous,

the capital lay before the eyes of those braves who, from the beautiful streams of France and Germany, had dared to invade the horrid deserts of Old Russia. Those foremost called to their comrades behind. Those wearied with the exertions of the march, felt a new return of strength in their veins; all recollection of their pains, sorrows, dangers and privations suddenly vanished. Like a stream which suddenly overflows its banks and rushes on in a rapid course, so did the crowd of soldiers stream up the hill. The stronger the masses of the army became on the summit, the louder were the reverberations through the silent sky.

"This, then, is the Capital of the Czars, rich in fables and wonders!" exclaimed Bernard, after gazing some time. "We have found it at length behind the forests and wastes which protectingly surround it!"

"It is time," said Rasinski, casting a glance back upon the army; "high time!"

Louis gazed upon the imposing city with that reverential wonder that at the same time eases and elevates the heart.

"A glorious picture!" exclaimed Bernard with animation. "Oh, what a pity that it cannot be painted! Observe the masses of cupolas there in their brilliancy and splendor; then the confused crowd of tops of houses below, and the green stripes and spots marking the gardens that like veins wind their way through the stones; the silvery gleams which the stream brilliantly throws upon the landscape; and look at this terrible army, which like a black flood, rolls over the fields. See only how the bayonets shine in the sun, and the plumes and metal of the cannon seen yonder in a long line at the edge of the forest. Here and there the eye is lost in a labyrinth; for the last towers of the city already disappear in blue fogs, and the long train of carriages and the rear of the army are enclosed in invisible regions."

During this conversation they had slowly ridden down the hill. For some time the confusion had prevailed that is generally created by extraordinary events on the march; but the men were finally got into line.

Thus they approached nearer and nearer to the city, expecting every moment to meet a resolute enemy. Suddenly they halted—a rumor ran through the lines that the King of Naples was engaged in amicable conversation with the leader of the Cossacks. Already hopes were entertained that the struggle would end here—that peace was at hand—that the reward for all their pains and dangers was secure and immediate. Rasinski was desirous of learning the truth; he therefore rode a little in advance. He found it true that Murat had really spoken to some Cossacks and made them presents.

But they had only accompanied a single officer, who claimed an unmolested retreat for the rear-guard of Kutosow's army; if this were refused, they threatened to set the city on fire as they left it behind them. The Emperor, informed of this, had consented, and they now began to enter the city.

While Prince Eugene and Prince Poniatowski with their corps proceeded along the right and left of the main road, thereby surrounding the city, Rasinski and his soldiers followed the King of Naples, who cautiously advanced in a straight line. He fully counted on serious fighting in the streets.

And now they passed through the streets of the suburb. They were empty and desolate, as had been the villages they had passed in numbers on their way to this long desired point.

"The people must be terribly afraid of us," observed Bernard to Jaromir, who rode close by his side; "they show us neither the tips of their noses, nor an inch of their beards? Is there not a single handsome child curious enough to peep out of these small windows? It is well enough for the enemy to fear us, but the girls should not be afraid. Are we cannibals? What the devil do they take us for?"

"I suppose," replied Louis, "that the inhabitants of these suburbs have fled to the city. They fear, perhaps, the first invasion; and it is not improbable that a skirmish may have been fought here. In that case, he who cannot use arms is certainly the worst off."

"And especially here," said Rasinski, turning round, having heard the conversation, "where the wooden houses would burn as quick as dry straw, so soon as the first grenade was cast into them."

"It would be an infernal trick," observed Jaromir, if our winter quarters should be burned down. It appears to me, that a repose of six or seven months, which I expect to have here, will benefit us."

Rasinski was silent, but on his brow could be read that he did not agree with Jaromir's hope. "The thing most desirable," he said after a pause, "would be a peace as soon as possible. And were this to arrive, the presence of the Emperor is more required in the centre of Europe than here, almost on the frontiers of Asia."

Boleslaus rode earnestly and silently forward, as usual, without taking part in the conversation.

Suddenly the line halted again. As Rasinski was not at the head, he could not see what obstacle stood in the way. But on looking forward, he saw Colonel Regnard coming down the street. This officer still wore his arm in a sling, and a broad black plaster on his forehead.

"Good evening, Colonel," cried Rasinski. "What is the matter with the head of the column?"

"Ah! friend Rasinski. How goes it?" replied Regnard. "I am happy to see you well, although I knew before from the report that you had been saved from the carnage of that horrid engagement. What stops us? Nothing but a broken bridge over the Moskwa, which will be immediately repaired. But," added he, beckoning his friend, when he continued the conversation in an inaudible tone.

Bernard, who with his keen eye always saw through the meaning of another, remarked a strange agitation in Rasinski's features. Even Regnard's countenance underwent a foreboding change. Something extraordinary or dangerous must have happened, and of this he was informing Rasinski. But their conversation lasted only three minutes when Regnard continued his way. With gloomy brow Rasinski turned to his men. He seemed on the point of communicating what he had heard from the Colonel, when the column was again set in motion, and as is always the case after a stoppage, had to advance quickly. Soon they reached the stream of the Moskwa; the bridge had been so imperfectly repaired that they preferred riding through the flat river. Bernard observed that Rasinski looked with excited attention at the houses and streets the nearer they came to the real city. Finally they reached the walls which enclosed it.

"Here the streets are wider and the houses larger," said Bernard. "Those buildings ahead look like palaces. I think we shall now make the acquaintance of the long beards and pretty girls of the place."

"The contrary is what I fear," said Rasinski, turning around and speaking in a low, but very concerned tone. "According to Colonel Regnard's information, the whole city is as desolate as the large cemetery we passed on entering."

These words, designed for those nearest to him, filled all with cold terror.

"How!—Impossible!" exclaimed Jaromir; "that would be a signal for a renewal of the war—for the most resolute resistance, even after we had reached the heart of the empire."

"That is indeed to be feared. The forebodings are now being fulfilled which gloomily rose in my mind on first entering old Russia. We have no longer to fear the Emperor Alexander and his armies—we have no longer to fight with them, but against an immense population, burning with the fury which fanaticism kindles in the hearts of man. Deeply sunk as they are in superstition—slavish in obedience to their Gods as to their sovereign, it would be impossible to persuade them that we are

not come to destroy their altars—to plunder their churches—to dishonor their women. It will no longer be a war between two powers, where the decision is made on the battlefield, or in the council of ministers; no, a whole people arms itself against us—a people who curse us as the scum of hell. The single is the enemy of the single;—hatred is implanted in the breast of the wife and the boy. There is no longer a noble, majestic struggle of thoughts, honor, or glory, but all degenerates into horrible murder, strife and bloodshed, where victory and defeat are equally terrible."

A gloomy fire lighted his eye as he spoke; his high forehead was drawn into deep folds, and profound grief contracted his lips. Bernard looked at him fixedly. The beauty—the noble solemnity of his manly face made him for a moment forget why these clouds had gathered over it in so earnest a majesty. Really, he thought within himself, man is most beautiful when a noble pain from the depth of his heart shines through the light cover of the eye upon his face. For this reason the ancients presented their heroes in those earnest attitudes. Even in the image of their Gods the slight breathing of sorrow appears which ennobles and beautifies the features."

The streets through which they passed made a strange impression: alive with the clang of war, they yet were deadly still, for the houses on either hand stood like silent tombs, whence no sound or sign of life proceeded. Not a single chimney smoked. The cupolas of the cathedral glittered in shining gold, encircled with wreaths of green; the pillars of palaces towered in lofty magnificence. But the glories of this noble architecture resembled the dismal finery of a corpse laid out in state for a last melancholy exhibition, so mute, so rigid was all it enclosed. This mixture of the wanton splendor of life with the profound stillness and solitude of death was so painful that it oppressed the hearts of those rough warriors, who as yet, however, were far from suspecting the terrible truth.

For two hours the troops had perambulated this stony desert, in whose labyrinthine mazes they became ever more deeply involved. Their progress was of the slowest, for the King of Naples, still refusing to believe what each moment rendered more apparent, was in constant expectation of a surprise, and could not banish the idea that the foe cunningly inveigled him into this confused and treacherous network of streets and lanes in order the better suddenly to assail him. He therefore sent strong detachments into every side-street to seek the enemy supposed to lurk there. None was detected. A dreadful stillness reigned in the huge city, where erst the din

of traffic deafened every ear. There was heard but the dull, hollow hoof-tramp of the horses, and the jar of the weapons dimly reverberated from the tall, dead walls; so that when the column halted complete silence spread like a shroud over the awe-stricken host. For the soldier was infected with the gloom of the scene, so that, although entering the hostile capital, no cry of victory or shout of joy escaped him; but grave and silent, scrutinizing with astonished eye the surrounding edifices, in vain quest of a trace of life, he entered the metropolis of the old Czars.

Now the walls and pinnacles of the Kremlin rose in dark majesty above the intruders' heads. For the first time a refreshing sound was heard—a confused jumble of human voices and warlike stir. It was a party of the inhabitants, collected in a dark swarm round a train of carts conveying provisions and wounded men, who had not been soon enough got out of the city. A few Cossacks, left behind to escort them, spurred their active little horses and quickly disappeared in the maze of streets, uninjured by the bullets sent after them. Suddenly, from the Kremlin, at whose doors the French had now arrived, issued a horrible uproar of howling voices. Rasinski, at the noise of the firing, had galloped to the head of the column, followed by Bernard, to ascertain its cause; and even his manly heart, long accustomed to sounds and perils of every description, beat quickly at the ghastly tumult. His eye followed the direction given by his ear, and he beheld, upon the Kremlin's walls, a group of hideous figures, both men and women, furiously gesticulating, and evidently resolved to defend the entrance to the holy fortress. The women's tangled and dishevelled hair, the wild bristling beards of the men, the distorted features and frantic gestures of all, their horrible cries, and rags, and filth, and barbarous weapons, composed a picture frightful beyond expression.

"What!" cried Rasinski, with a start, "has hell sent against us its most hideous demons?"

"Are they men or spectres?" inquired the shuddering Bernard.

Again the grisly band set up their wild and horrid shriek, and shots were fired from the wall into the compact mass of soldiers. The King of Naples waved a white handkerchief in sign of truce, and called to Rasinski to tell the people in their own language that no harm should be done to them if they abandoned their useless and desperate opposition. Rasinski rode forward, but scarcely had he uttered the first word of peace, when his voice was drowned in a horrid yell, whilst the women furiously beat their breasts and

tore their hair. Once more Rasinski called to them to yield. Thereupon a woman of colossal stature, whose loosened hair fell wildly on her shoulders, sprang upon a turret of the wall.

"Dog!" she cried, "with my teeth will I rend thee, like a hungry wolf her prey! Robber! thou shalt be torn like the hunter who despoils the she-bear of her cubs! Curse upon ye, murderers of our sons and husbands! Curse upon ye, spoilers of our cities! A triple curse upon the godless crew, who defile our holy altars, and scoff the Almighty with a devil's tongue! Woe shall be your portion, worse your sufferings than those of the damned in the sulphur-pit! Curses, eternal curses upon ye all!"

Rasinski shuddered. This menacing figure, although fearful to behold, excited not loathing. Wide robes of black and grey shrouded the person of the Pythoness; a blood-red cloth, half-cap, half-turban, was twined around her head. Her grizzled hair fluttered in the wind, her glittering eye rolled wildly in its orbit, whilst her open mouth poured forth curses, and her upraised hands appealed to heaven to fulfil them.

Summoning all his strength, Rasinski once more shouted, in his lion-like voice—

"Madmen! do you reject mercy?"

Another wild howl, accompanied with threatening gestures, drowned his words. By a sign he warned the King that all was in vain, and Murat gave orders to burst open the door. The artillery was already unlimbered, and three shots whose thunder resounded fearfully in the empty city, crashed through the barrier, which broke and shivered at the shock. As it opened, a dense throng of the mad Russians streamed out, and dashed headlong into the French ranks. The invaders would fain have spared them, for they were too few to prompt a powerful foe to needless bloodshed; but the fanatical patriotism of the infuriates made mercy impossible. Like ferocious beasts, they threw themselves upon their foes, thinking only of destroying all they could. One raging madman, armed with a tree-branch, fashioned into a huge club, struck down two Frenchmen, and with a few agile leaps was close to the King of Naples—as usual foremost in danger—when Rasinski sprang forward and cut at him with his sabre. But the blow fell flat; with the fury of a goaded hound, the wounded man sprang upon the Count, dragged him with giant strength from his saddle, hurled him to the ground, and threw himself upon him. In a moment Bernard was off his horse, and grappling the lunatic, who strove to throttle Rasinski, pulled him violently backwards. A French officer sprang to his assistance. With the greatest difficulty they

unlocked the fierce grasp in which the Russian held Rasinski; and when this was done the wretch gnashed his teeth, and strove to use them on his prostrated opponent. But Rasinski had now an arm at liberty, and when his furious foe advanced his head to bite, he struck him with his clenched fist so severe a blow in the mouth, that a thick dark stream of blood gushed over his breast and face. Nevertheless, the barbarian yielded not, but made head against the three men with all the prodigious strength of his muscular body, until a bullet from the pistol of a dragoon, who coolly put the muzzle to his breast and shot him through the heart, laid him lifeless on the ground.

Rasinski and Bernard shuddered at this struggle; it was too much like the true butchering of the barbarians, and must naturally fill a noble, manly breast with disgust.

Meanwhile the others, who still resisted, were partly cut down, or with despairing howls had taken to flight. It did not seem worth while to pursue them, therefore they were permitted to disperse through the desolate streets of the city, and the King of Naples continued the march with his men.

It now became more necessary than ever to use the greatest caution in proceeding through the labyrinth of streets. The soldier who saw all these rich houses and palaces abandoned by their proprietors, naturally directed his thoughts to the booty which he hoped soon to gain. Many tried to leave their ranks, but, as an example to the rest, a general promptly shot with his own hand a dragoon who was slipping away into another street.

Rasinski received orders to occupy a large palace, the appearance of which indicated much wealth in the proprietor. With the few men he had left to him, and a battalion of riflemen for support, he separated from the corps of the King of Naples, and in the middle of the town formed a camp. He formally took possession of the palace and the surrounding houses, with no living being to oppose. Boleslaus received orders to take out of the houses all such things as might serve for clothing or food to the soldiers.

Thus the troops for the present established an orderly bivouac in the middle of the street, or rather square, opposite the palace. In this building Rasinski established his head-quarters, and Louis and Bernard were installed in their duties of service.

CHAPTER LII.

THE mansion which Rasinski and his two young friends occupied was of antique and noble structure. The gate was high, vaulted, and strongly mounted with iron ; it had been necessary to force it open, on account of its being bolted from the inside, a sign that there were either people still in the building, or that they had fled through the garden. The latter seemed the most probable. When the two winding stairs, which from both sides of the hall conducted into wide corridors on the second floor, were ascended, doors leading to a long line of rooms and saloons were discovered. They appeared to be of a splendor and richness which, even in Russia, could not be common ; but the furniture, the form of the mirrors, the papering, and gilding proved that the decorations had been owned and used by at least the last progenitors of the present proprietors.

In the room adjoining the stairs Louis and Bernard arranged the office. To the right of this was a spacious saloon, and next to that a smaller one, which Rasinski arranged for himself, and which seemed to have been a kind of boudoir. To the left of the office Louis and Bernard chose their sleeping apartments, consisting of two large rooms.

It was night. In the streets large watch-fires burned briskly, with the men lying around in bivouac. Rasinski had gone down to inspect the troops and to provide for their wants. Bernard's steps were directed to the taking a survey of the wings of the building. Louis was sitting in the half dark room he had chosen for his dwelling. In the midst of the evening dusk, of the reflected light of fires on the windows, of the gloomy sound of confused voices, and the clattering of arms, Louis had given himself up to his dreams. The beautiful pictures of past times passed like brilliant apparitions before his mind's eye. Since the intelligence of his mother's death this was the first solitary, calm hour which the busy movements of war had given him. A gloomy melancholy overspread his soul. Leaning his head upon one arm of the chair he sat plunged in reverie, and thoughtlessly his eye passed over the high, vaulted room. Thus he had not remarked Bernard's entrance, remaining standing in the half open door, looking at him. But, through the twilight, the latter saw tears rolling down Louis' cheek, and the sparkling of the fire reflected in them.

" So, plunged in thought, brother ?" said he, addressing him.

" Alas ! Bernard," said Louis, " is it you ? Yes, I am indeed oppressed by gloomy thoughts. How can a human being feel otherwise in this terrible place ?"

" Hem !" observed Bernard ; " neither is my heart a cornucopia of pleasure ; and if with my recollections I play *laterna magica*, the devil and his grandmother pass along the wall. But, as to this place here, I must tell you that it is haunted."

" How so ?"

" We are not alone in this house, I can swear."

" What grounds have you for this suspicion ?"

" Several. I went through the long corridors towards the wing of the building adjoining the garden. Taking hold of the latches of the doors, I found them all locked except one. This I passed through, and was surprised to find a comfortable warmth there. I looked around and found myself in a kind of kitchen, where there were still ashes on the hearth. The ashes were warm. Yes, I even discovered, on poking among them with my sabre, that coals were still glowing."

" The occupants were probably here as late as this morning."

" So I thought ; but, suddenly I heard a noise beneath me, as if something heavy had fallen. That astonished me. I hurried to the corridor again and discovered a small staircase which leads into a lower story, where I again found a corridor, containing a suite of rooms, with locked doors. I tried to open—to break them—but they were too firmly bolted. I knocked, called, shouted, but received no answer. Finally, tired of all this, I went away. But, as I ascended the small stairs again, I heard something rustle, and at the same time, steps, as of a female foot. Assured that my ear did not deceive me, I hurried up ; and, although I looked around everywhere, yet I could not discover the least thing. Soon I saw something white shining on the floor in front of the door of the kitchen. I took it up. See, it is a ribbon ; and I will swear a sacred oath it was not there just before. I looked around to discover the fair one who had lost it, but in vain. All remained silent—all was locked. But I will not say whether it was a good or evil spirit, a spectre, or even the famous *White Lady*, who haunts these corridors."

" How strange !" said Louis, thoughtfully. " Could the unfortunate inmates be hidden, for fear of injury ?"

" Possibly. Yet I am fonder of spectres, enchanted ladies who are panting for liberty, walled-up nuns, whose souls can find no rest, and who must walk in these halls. About midnight I shall pursue a second reconnoitring—will you be of the party ?"

" Most willingly ; if your own exhaustion does not engage you to do something better," said Louis, smiling.

" What ! are you sitting here in the dark, my friends ?" exclaimed Rasinski, who at

this moment entered. "It is time to have candles lit, and fire also, for in these halls the evenings are cold."

He ordered his groom to bring a light and kindle a fire in the small room which he occupied. This was the only small room in the house which had a chimney, and which of an evening gave a more comfortable warmth than the ponderous stoves in the other apartments.

"I have just received letters for myself and you," continued Rasinski; "let us go and read them together, then relate to one another what each of our friends writes us from home. It is a pleasant omen to me to have received a welcome salute already, on the first day of our residence in this capital."

Rasinski's groom lit a lamp, and shortly the fire burned brightly. Rasinski now handed to Louis two letters, of different dates, but which had arrived at the same time—a circumstance not uncommon with field-mails.

Bernard whistled and stirred the fire with the tongs, while Louis and Rasinski read. "It is very pleasant to have no correspondents," he observed; "there is then no postage to pay, no answers to make, nor even to read." He continued to whistle.

"Yes, yes, you are happier than we," exclaimed Louis, suddenly, and with violence dropping the hand in which he held the letter he had just read. "From receiving such letters as these may Heaven spare you!"

"What is it? What is the matter?" asked Bernard, starting from his seat.

"I can suspect it, after what my sister writes to me," said Rasinski; "it is a nameless villainy; but they shall not succeed."

"Black as night and poisonous as the rattlesnake," exclaimed Louis, almost beside himself. "And for my sake the unprotected must suffer such an outrage!"

"What is it? Speak, in Satan's name," said Bernard, with flashing eyes, for he suspected something of the truth.

"Read, read!" said Louis, handing him the letter.

Bernard hastily took it, thinking to read it quickly over, but as hastily as he had taken it he cast it away, and exclaimed, "There are too many lines; they cross each other like a heap of poisonous spiders. Tell it me in two words, for I have not patience to swallow the poison slowly."

"It is revolting to all in whose breast beats a manly heart," said Rasinski, as he paced the room with rapid strides. "The villains who pursue you have found the unhappy sister;—chance, or their infernal tricks have discovered the secret, and—"

"She is in prison?" cried Bernard, vio-

lently interrupting him, while the fire of rage flamed in his eye.

"No, happily not," continued Rasinski; "but the wretch has made her the most revolting proposals, and as a price, the brother's head—"

"Say no more, Colonel!" exclaimed Bernard, in a half-commanding, half-praying tone. "Must the brother hear it twice?" At the same time he embraced Louis, and with convulsive energy pressed him to his breast. "Oh, the charming rose! What pains, what horror must her loving heart have felt, when the poisonous worm wound itself up to her! But we must thank God that she is saved! for I see by your looks that she is, or you would not stand here thus. Still my inmost soul trembles. Dear Louis!"

And anew they embraced. Rasinski laid his hands upon their shoulders and said with emotion, "We have cause to thank God!"

"Let us now read what she writes to you," interrupted Bernard, with a voice full of emotion.

"I have not opened the second letter yet," said Louis; "the first has put me into too powerful an excitement. Perhaps this will give some explanation."

"Let us hear."

DRESDEN, AUGUST 19TH.

"DEAR BROTHER:—What a time this is! Hours are now as fruitful of events as formerly were years. We left Toplitz the morning following the scene, which on the same evening I hurriedly informed you of. This night we passed in the village of our aunt; in the morning we all, unobserved, drove hither. On her death-bed, mother spoke to me of a secret; but pain and grief then so overpowered me that I did not remark what she said; for what could then be important to me in this world? And yet—but hear. Mother pointed out to me that a secret drawer of her writing-desk contained papers of importance. O, Louis! with what emotion did I read them! As soon as they can possibly be forwarded in a safe way, you shall receive all the documents touching this dreadful story; now I can only give you an extract, which the flying minutes permit me. Our real name is not Rosen; our father was called Steinfels, and owned an estate in Franconia. His confiding heart was his misfortune. In March, 1793, he visited a friend of his youth, called Waldheim, who had been an officer, but having been taken prisoner by the French, then lived in Strasbourg, whither his wife had followed him—a woman, whose charms, according to our mother's description, were beyond all comparison. A Frenchman, Rumigny, insulted this lady by dishonorable proposals."

Here Louis stopped for a moment, as Rasinski was interrupted by the entrance of an orderly, who transmitted to him some information. But on receiving a sign he immediately continued :

" When they were rejected he sought revenge in the blackest calumnies. The insulted husband, who knew his faithful wife, heard of this. He challenged the calumniator, forced him to a duel ; and father was the second. But the wretch, who had several companions with him, fired against the rules of the duel, and laid the ill-fated Waldheim on the ground. Our father was beside himself ; but in the moment, care to save perhaps the life of the fallen was more important than the forcibly suppressed feeling of revenge. Our father could not immediately punish the villains. His friend died in a few moments. Our parent challenged the murderer ; he was answered in scorn. A human feeling now overpowered him—Louis ! who could condemn him—he sought for the wretch, to take revenge, or force him to fight. His faithful servant, Willhofen, accompanied him ; but the villain had received warning, so enticed his antagonist into the net. By scorn he provoked him, father lost his self-command, sword in hand he rushed upon his antagonist, but was disarmed, and taken prisoner along with the faithful Willhofen. To destroy his victim with more certainty, the villain endeavored to represent him as a spy, a traitor to France, who stood in the service of another power. He was sent to Paris. The guillotine threatened him. But Willhofen, who participated in all his miseries, found in the goaler a countryman from Alsace. This latter favored their escape, and they both got to Havre, on board a Dutch vessel. From thence, father first wrote to mother, informed her of all that had happened, and conjured her to go immediately to Hamburg, where he would meet her. She went thither, and in vain awaited the arrival of her husband. Days and weeks, finally a month passed by, and her dreadful uncertainty did not end. Meanwhile she was informed, that through the power of the French rulers, which then already extended everywhere, even at home, a prosecution had been commenced against our father for murder, and that he was called upon to stand before his judges. What more shall I tell you ? He never returned, his property was confiscated, and when the French took possession of Franconia, his name was declared infamous, and himself set down as a traitor on the lists of the Parisian police. This induced our mother to take the name of Rosen, and retire with us to Dresden, where her sister, our aunt, lived a widow. A thousand other particulars I would tell you, my dearest

brother, if at this moment it could be done above all, the boundless love and care, which together with other reasons, induced our mother to forbear communicating to her children the secret hanging over the head of our father. But a day will come when the sisterly breast can freely and unreservedly pour itself into your heart. Now grief weighs me down. In another quarter of an hour, I leave for Warsaw, with the Countess Micelska, and there I shall be safe from all persecution. Oh, if you only were safe too ! But the horrors of war still threaten you in front, and black treason is at your back. Oh, Louis, and you bear arms for those who brought such misery upon your father and your country ! I do not reproach you ; but can misfortune still rise higher ? can we sink deeper into dishonor ? My warmest prayers I daily send to heaven in your behalf ! But from my inmost soul I also pray for the liberation of our country from the iron yoke under which it now bends. I must conclude. Salute your friends for me, Bernard—the noble Rasinski,—Alas ! were it otherwise in this world !

YOUR MARY."

Surprise and emotion almost deprived Louis of power to read the letter to the end. Now only it was that he plainly and clearly re-collected some of the earlier events of his childhood—for at the time of the misfortune, he was five years of age. Now only when they were explained, did several slight allusions, hints and words of his mother about the fate of his father, rise like brilliant stars above the horizon of the past. But much still remained veiled in dark clouds ! Rasinski had been especially moved by the last words of the letter, touching a wound in his heart of which even Louis had no suspicion. He stood leaning with his arms folded against one of the pillars of the chimney, and gloomily looking down.

Upon Bernard the letter seemed to have made less impression, for his soul was still occupied with the contents of the first. He sat on the other side of the fire, playing with his ring, and turning it round on his finger.

" In the first moments only, my good Louis," he commenced after a pause, " such information moves us greatly. A father who has not been heard of for twenty years must be considered dead ; and grief for one who has been absent such a length of time is not generally lasting."

" You are so good and faithful, Bernard," replied Louis, " you so thoroughly understand the heart of your friend, do you not know that it must touch and agitate him to hear that perhaps he has still a father, who may have suffered constant misfortune, boundless misery, and who may even now be suffer-

ing still ? If you were in such a situation—”

“ And am I not ? Perhaps I have a father and mother still in this world, and perhaps I might even find them ; but I assure you that I shall care little about those who for twenty years have cared nothing for me. It is certainly different with you, as you know that your father did not abandon you ; you lost him early ; and everything proves that he was a noble gentleman.”

“ Do you tell me that you have still parents living ?” said Louis in astonishment.

“ I learnt it myself only two years ago, in London, when my foster-father died ; but at that time my head was full of other things—and since then time has made me indifferent to it. By this ring (he threw it over the table to Louis) I was to recognise my true parents ; and yet three months ago I should have parted with it freely for something dearer to me, had I not been a fool. My foster-father, whom I thought my own, was a poor pastor in a country near Wurzburg. When in my tenth year I began to draw tolerably well, he sent me to his brother, in Dresden, whom you know. It is not necessary to tell you that I found no comfort with this harsh old Philistine. Finally I broke the chains and began to travel. About this time my foster-father, the priest, died, and his brother was his heir—that is to say, he received the papers he had left. Among them was one which he sent to me to London. With his own hand he wrote upon it, something like the following :—‘ One evening, when I was in bed, I heard the bell of my door violently pulled. The housekeeper opened it ; a boy, about five years old, who could not possibly reach the bell-string, stood before it ; it was you. He had a letter in his hand addressed to me, I opened it, and found a note for two thousand florins on a banker of Frankfort, which was mine on condition that I would educate the child who carried it—that I was known to be an honest man, deserving of this confidence—and that some time hence enquiries would be made after the child. I have done my duty according to my best ability, although war soon afterwards deprived me of what I had received for the boy. His talent for painting induced me to send him to my brother, in Dresden. His linen was marked with the letter B. ; in consequence I called him Bernard. This, and the gold wedding-ring, which at a later period was accidentally found sewed up in the boy’s dress, and which bears the initials B. W., are the only signs by which he may at some future time recognise his own parents.’

“ This document and ring was sent to London by my uncle—or at least by him

whom I always considered as such—with the order that I should either there or at home make enquiries after my real parents. Neither was there anything else left for me to do, for you know that my uncle died so suddenly, two years ago, that even my answer did not find him alive. Thus our destinies are the same. But I can assure you, Louis, that I did not move a finger for the purpose of making a discovery. What can I do with parents who have not cared for me during my life ? Rich or poor, noble or abject, it is the same to me ; love they could never have entertained. With you it is certainly otherwise—but also far more improbable—for what reasonable man counts upon the highest number in the lottery ? I would only try to find out the rascal Rumigny, or whatever his name is, and kill him perhaps. But your father ;—twenty years’ disappearance is tantamount to dead.”

“ No, Bernard,” exclaimed Louis, “ I cannot feel thus. Powerfully the hope of again finding a father works in my breast, and if I should succeed, I might perhaps make the last days of his life happy. And this love is nearer to me than revenge upon one who has perhaps long since avenged his own guilt. No, I hope still !”

“ That hope will last just eight days. During the next few months, the feeling will rise now and then ; but when years have passed, and all remained the same, you will see them expire like an unfed flame.”

Meanwhile Rasinski had taken and attentively examined the ring.

“ Hem ! What letters, did you say, were inscribed on the ring ?”

“ B. W.”

“ If,” observed Rasinski, in the tone of reprimand, “ such tender ties are disregarded, then certainly it is impossible to follow them. I do not read B. W., but plainly L. W. on the ring.”

“ Impossible !” replied Bernard, quickly seizing the ring, and holding it to the light. Delusion of hell !” he exclaimed, suddenly turning pale. “ B. W. was inscribed on my ring, or may I be eternally damned. Do you joke with me ?” he suddenly exclaimed, turning to Rasinski.

“ How can you think it !” said the latter, rising. Louis also looked at his friend in the greatest agitation. In his features there was an animation he had never seen there before—his composure was lost—he seemed totally overpowered by the feelings of his breast.

Suddenly he laughed wildly and furiously. “ It is nothing, I say, nothing. One of the most gigantic accidents of chance, about which certainly one might lose one’s reason ! I believe fate will take revenge upon me. I

did not believe in its wonders in common life ; now it scorns me with them—but almost too cruelly ! Ah ! " and he pressed his hand before his eyes, " who can now tell me whether I am mocked by the grinning apparitions of a dream, or whether reality shows these scornful faces to me. Take hold of me, in the devil's name ! shake me that I may awake and throw off the weight which threatens to crush my heart."

" Bernard, dear Bernard !" said Louis, pressing his hands, " what is the matter with you ? Compose yourself, recollect yourself, and speak. What unnerves you so terribly ?"

Like one, who from senseless convulsions returns to life, and in deadly exhaustion is unable to keep his balance, Bernard now fell into the arms of his friend.

CHAPTER LIII.

DURING the first evening of their residence in Moscow, Jaromir and Boleslaus were separated from their friends, as their presence to control the soldiers seemed indispensable. But when the bivouac fires were burning, and the soldiers had arranged themselves as well as they could, and through the care of Rasinski had been sufficiently provided with provisions, it could well be permitted to some leaders to leave their posts for a short time and let their comrades meanwhile fill their places. Jaromir did so. Although he had seen and experienced much already, the entrance into a new and celebrated capital was still an event which charmed and moved him in different ways. In wonder he had gazed upon the palaces, the long streets, the large squares ; the Kremlin, with its towers and battlements, made upon him a powerful impression. He wished to walk through these streets, to visit the bivouacs of his comrades, to converse with them ; in short, to enjoy the amusement of a warrior's leisure, after the long exertions he had been subjected to. Boleslaus remarked Jaromir's aspirations, and being of a kind disposition, offered to take his place, even before Jaromir had asked him to do so. Arm in arm, with two officers of the infantry regiment, put under Rasinski's orders for the time, he gaily began his walk through the streets of the wonderful city, just as it began to grow dark.

" These two towers here, with their golden cupolas, we must keep in sight," said he to his companions ; " they will show us our way back."

Lebrun and Lacoste, his companions, were

gay and merry as Jaromir himself. "*Markborough s'en va en guerre*," sang Lebrun, with a pleasant voice and agreeable intonation, and the others joined him.

Perambulating several streets, in which they met corps of artillery, they came to the Kremlin. Here large bivouacs were established. The " Young Guard" had chosen this place for their camp.

The long lines of pyramids, formed by guns stacked together, shone brilliantly in the reflection of the watch-fires which had been lit along the streets. The soldier is always fond of decorating his camp with warlike emblems, and so even here in front of every battalion, a trophy of drums and eagles had been erected. In the places where long streets opened, cannon were placed, with burning matches sticking in the ground behind them. For the amusement of the men, music was heard from every side. But there were only a few who had still strength and good humor enough to prefer a merry dance—the beloved *Française*, to quiet repose on the straw-covered pavement. On the whole, the camp presented the animated, but not the merry sight which such a nomadical town generally gives, especially after a day of triumph. The dresses of most of the soldiers were torn, or blackened with powder ; the Guards were not an exception either, although they had not fought at Borodino :—but afterwards, when Kutosow again took a fortified position near Krimskoy, three miles from Moscow, they honorably participated in the battle. Here and there a merry song was heard. ; but most of the bearded warriors lay wrapped up in their cloaks, sleeping, or carelessly looking into the fires, beside which their smoking cooking-pots stood.

" Let us proceed to the quay where those magnificent houses stand," said Jaromir.

There were soldiers here too. It was the " Old Guard." But very little order prevailed among these otherwise excellently-drilled troops. The doors of the houses were broken, and the privates had sought their comfort in the wide halls ; the officers were lolling in the windows of the upper stories. The soldiers were bringing wood and straw ; others brought bedding, carpets, cushions, bolsters, which they found in the abandoned houses, to procure for themselves comfortable couches, for the soldiers were the happy heirs of the emigrants. The bivouac presented a striking, almost oriental appearance, from these decorations ; especially as there were some Mamelukes of the Emperor, with long pipes in their mouths, comfortably stretching themselves on a magnificent embroidered red carpet and blue bolsters, which they had found in the adjoining palace.

" Hem !—you have provided yourselves

comfortably," said Lacoste ; " the guard must certainly have a preference. But no one knows whether you have carried the bivouac into the house or the house into the bivouac. Why did you not lie down on the cushions inside ?"

" The orders are for a bivouac, *mon capitaine*," replied a sergeant with brilliant black moustaches ; " yet I hope it will not last long. After all, in so beautiful a night, *ça ira bien*."

" Beautiful night ! The wind appears to me to be blowing roughly enough," replied Jaromir.

" If it will only not extinguish the fires," replied the sergeant, laughing, " then it is good."

" Rather say," observed Lebrun, " if it only does not increase them. Your bivouacs, friend, are not the most orderly between the Ebro and the Moskwa. From your arrangements the straw might burn under you during the night, when all sleep and the watchers are drowsy."

" Indeed," said Jaromir, laughing, " you would do it nicely were you to burn your own winter quarters down. Straw and hay are scattered here like powder."

" Pshaw ! Straw is not powder. What easily burns is also easily extinguished," returned the sergeant.

" Not always," replied Lacoste ; " with a cigar I could set your bivouac on fire, but it would be difficult to find in flat Moskwa as much water as it would take to extinguish it again."

" We shall soon have order established, *mon capitaine*," replied the sergeant, bowing, while the officers continued their way.

" Yet I am surprised that this is permitted," observed Jaromir, " for it is really dangerous."

" Certainly," said Lacoste, shrugging his shoulders ; " but the Emperor is not hard towards the *garde*. He confides too much in the belief that they are all veterans, who are well acquainted with war and discipline, and who know their own wants so well that they are able to judge what is best to be done. It is so on the march, in the camp, and in the battle ; but you know well that when once the day of repose has come for the soldier, it is hard to get him to work. As long as he is occupied it goes right, and you can heap upon his shoulders as much as he can bear ; but when at last he has stretched out his tired limbs in the bivouac of a conquered capital, the devil may take care of things, for he won't. He also trusts somewhat to good fortune. His consolation is, the balls which do not hit."

During this conversation they walked on. Every new step they took would have afforded

a picture to the hand of an experienced painter. Here an old warrior lay asleep, as if only to be awakened by the trump of the last judgment, not feeling that the soles of his boots already began to burn at the fire. Jaromir kindly pushed him aside, that the poor devil might not finally be obliged to go barefooted. There was a sutler-woman who, surrounded by a set of merry soldiers, knowing how to combine female artfulness with pride of honesty in her trade, served many at a time. Farther off, players, singers, dancers, and near to them a group of comfortable chattering old grey-beards, with more scars on their bodies than hairs on their heads ; again, a sick man who, with tied-up head, had wrapped his cloak around him and thrown himself upon the straw ; a piper who, in the habit of a *sans-culotte*, had picturesquely sat down upon a drum to mend his own breeches ; even a mother with a two-year-old boy sat playing with her children by the fire. It was the only sweet reward for that faithfulness and love which had given her the courage to wander through these immeasurable deserts.

Jaromir was in the act of passing through a crowd of soldiers, who stood around a wagon loaded with rice, to receive their allowance, when he felt his coat pulled by some one. He looked around ; it was a nicely-dressed jockey, a boy who appeared to be about fifteen years of age, and whose presence in camp must certainly create astonishment. An English hat, with a broad brim and a black plume, adorned his head and half covered his face.

" What do you want, boy ?" asked Jaromir, surprised.

The boy bent his head a little, as if abashed, and said, " I am desired to beg you to follow me."

Jaromir's astonishment increased when he looked closer at the boy. The dusk, the red glow of the watch-fires, and the deep shadow of the brim of the hat, gave a particular romantic charm to the face. The features excited lively recollections in Jaromir's breast but to which he could give no distinct direction. Still he must have seen that boy before somewhere.

" Follow !" he repeated.

" Willingly—but whither ?"

" After me," said the boy, who had already half-turned around and endeavored to get out of the crowd. Jaromir hurried after, fearing that he should lose him in the throng.

His young guide turned into a narrow alley, through which they soon reached an open square. Now, suddenly the Kremlin, with its black gigantic towers and walls, rose before them in the twilight ; and in the last rays of the evening sun glowed the golden cross of St. Ivan on the top of the metropo-

litan church, high in the blue ether of heaven. Involuntarily Jaromir stopped for a moment and looked up ; but his guide, some steps in advance, now looked back as if to engage him to proceed, then waved with his hand, expressive that he should not lose time. They came to the portal of a magnificent palace ; the boy entered the gate and stopped for Jaromir to come up. He then took his hand and said,

" Now I must conduct you more cautiously, otherwise you would not find the way."

And indeed the size of the hall rendered the light of one lamp insufficient. The broad stairs which led to the upper story could hardly be seen. Jaromir stopped. Should he enter in this desolate city a strange house ? He was not afraid, yet he hesitated to confide himself to the guide.

" Stop, boy !" he said, " no further shall I go before you tell me whither."

" A Pole, a soldier, and to fear !" said he, in an almost scornful tone.

This answer displeased the valiant youth. " Fear !" he exclaimed ; " I almost believe that you think you frighten me. On, in the devil's name !—but you are my warrant for all that may happen."

The boy did not answer, but offered his hand to Jaromir, who took so firm a hold of it that his little guide could not escape. He then with his right hand drew his sabre and said,

" Now, forward, whither you will !"

The silent boy conducted him up the steps, opened a door, and led him through a number of rooms, which to all appearance stood empty. Jaromir's heart beat. A strange feeling arose within him, as if approaching some danger ; and yet he was driven by expectation to gain the solution of the mystery.

They had now reached a room which was completely dark. The boy locked the door behind him, and with a quick, unexpected turn escaped from Jaromir's grasp, and in a pleasant voice cried out to him in the darkness of the room :

" Wait here for a moment."

Jaromir tried to catch the boy, but he had vanished, and a second door being closed, intimated that he must have left the room.

Alone in the dark room, Jaromir became uncertain what course he should take. He tried to open the door through which he had entered, but in vain ; it resisted his efforts.

" What if this be some retreat where thou art threatened by the enemy ?" he said to himself. " But what could be the reason for selecting thee from so many thousands ? How accidentally wert thou met ! There are heads of more importance in the army than thine. But what in the world can they want ? What is this mystery ?"

Disturbed by these thoughts, he stepped to the window, which, being closed by heavy silk curtains, was observed only by a narrow streak of light. He drew the curtains aside ; the room was on the garden-side ; on the other shone the two towers in the reflection of the watch-fires, which stood near Jaromir's quarters, and were to serve him as guides. If he was not deceived the nearest way to his soldiers lay through the garden. He also recollecting having seen a long garden-wall, which ran along the street in which his bivouac lay. With military circumspection, he immediately collected all these circumstances in his mind, and no longer doubted that should the worst come, he could get into the garden, there reach the wall, and from thence be able to call for the assistance of his friends. In his thoughts he had already planned a retreat, in case he were attacked. To attain the garden was the only difficulty—the jump from the window being too hazardous. But chance favored him ; close at his side he suddenly heard a door turn on its hinges. Following the sound, he discovered a tapestried door, which, being badly closed, moved by the wind ; he opened it and stood in a corridor, the window of which opened into the garden, and as it was not closed by any curtain, he had sufficient light to overlook the place. After the first few steps he found a small stair-case, which, to his great satisfaction, conducted direct to the garden, the entrance to which was not even locked. He was now in the full possession of his liberty ; but a feeling of shame and honor drove him back. Satisfied with having secured his retreat, he was resolved to confront the adventure. He had just reached the dark room again, when the door through which his guide had disappeared opened, and a feeble stream of light shone into the room. A female figure, wrapped in white veils and dresses, entered with an easy, graceful step. She held in her hand a lamp of an antique form, the light of which was dimmed by a thick glass. Jaromir, who had prepared himself for an enemy, or at least for a diplomatic or dangerous military order, was greatly astonished. With some confusion he bowed, but the stranger placed the lamp upon the marble-table, stepped up to him, and without raising her veil, asked in a lovely voice, and which appeared to be well known to him :

" Can you guess who stands before you ?"

" By heavens, no !" exclaimed Jaromir, " but I must know you !"

" You have no faithful recollection," replied the unknown ; " and yet I recognised you in the midst of the whole crowd, and my heart then ceased to be oppressed on your account. I hoped to find a friend—a protec-

tor. But yet, I must beg you to be it to me!"

With these words she raised her veil and looked bashfully towards the floor. The twilight which was in the room still hid the features, which were not turned to the light. Jaromir, excited to the utmost, took her hand and quickly drew her towards the light; she made only a feeble resistance, and bashfully her head dropped down.

"Alisette! you?" he exclaimed in great astonishment, having now recognised her. "How is it possible that you should be here?"

With a timid expression, she cast her blue eye, in which a tear was lingering, up to him, and said in a trembling voice:

"It is indeed almost incomprehensible to myself, yet there exist times and circumstances which may bring even women into the strangest and most extraordinary positions. Alas! I feel deeply," she continued, casting down her eyes, "how strong appearances are against me—you condemn me because you see me here! But if you knew—"

"I swear to you!" exclaimed Jaromir, "that my heart will never be able to nourish an unworthy suspicion!"

"O, you kind friend!" said Alisette with emotion, taking his hand and pressing it with warmth. She then sank down on the sofa in exhaustion, and pressed her head into the silk cushion. She seemed silently to weep. Jaromir stood before her, and with beating heart gazed upon the beautiful girl. Her head rested upon her soft, thinly-covered arm; her curls fell gracefully over her cheeks and neck, her right arm hung down. Silently he sat at her side, and taking her hand, said with sincere emotion:

"Compose yourself, poor girl!"

She slowly raised herself. "Alas!" she sighed, "my strength forsakes me when the picture of my life presents itself in lively colors before my soul. Only pardon me!—You must now hear what fate brought me hither. But first answer me one question. Did you not recognise me before?"

"You! When?" asked Jaromir.

"Then you really did not recognise me in my male attire?"

"Impossible! And you were the gay, charming messenger yourself? Now I understand."

"The gay messenger!" interrupted Alisette with a bitter expression. Oh, if you but knew what it has cost me to play this part! But I stood on the stage, where I had often already stood with a crushed and bleeding heart, showing a merry face. But will you listen to me? Will my story not annoy you? Will you not refuse me advice and assistance?"

"A wretch I should be, did I not do all for you that lay in my power!" exclaimed Jaromir, and he pressed her tender hand, which was still resting in his, to his lips.

"Now tell me, tell me all!" said Jaromir; "dry these bitter tears, for you have found a friend—a brother!"

"And I will trust him like a brother," replied the maiden, slightly pressing his hand.

"Perhaps you do not know," she began, "that I hate my calling. Why—shall a woman—a girl, first explain it to you? But the most pressing need, care for the only child that a dear sister left, whom I lost in England, forced me to this miserable life. My talent, which I thought to possess only to beautify the life of others and my own, had to bend under the oppressing slavish duty of caring for bodily existence. Let me throw a veil over the sad fate which first led me upon this rough road. In Warsaw you found me—the hours which I passed in the house of the Countess—the few days when I saw you there, were the happiest of my life. Oh, how willingly would I have stayed there, but the revolting proposals of a man, in whose hands all my affairs were then placed, forced me to leave a city where I had been so happy, but from whence a rude storm had suddenly chased all those who gave me their friendship in return for my confidence; they are dispersed to all parts of the world. I afterwards followed you—only a few days after the Countess had departed. Without advice—without assistance—nothing was left me but to seize the first chance which the shipwreck had left to me. The manager of a theatre, who had placed the firmest confidence in the power and victories of the Emperor, occupied himself in the engagement of actors for a French stage, intending to entertain the army during their winter sojourn in Russia. At first it was rumored that the Emperor would remain at Witepsk; thither I followed the guide of my uncertain fate. I risked my life in the midst of the bustle of war; without fear, I dare say, for I had become acquainted with the storms of life. But we had hardly arrived at Witepsk when the army left that place, and the town became as desolate as before. Not to lose the great expense which had been incurred, the manager resolved to follow the army. He was firmly convinced that the Emperor would soon be in Moscow. He therefore endeavored to persuade us not to separate from him. Still, I should certainly have returned either to Poland or Germany, but—"here she stopped for a moment. "But why should I be ashamed to own it!" she continued blushing slightly, "I had no money to do so!"

"Oh, why did you not come to me—to Count Rasinski!" interrupted Jaromir. "Our

position was very near the city, and I visited it daily."

"O, had I seen you," replied Alisette, "I should perhaps have had the courage which such a prayer claims. But to any one else shame would have held me back. The Count I saw once; proudly and earnestly he passed on his noble charger; I stood at the window, but he observed me not."

"The impossibility of returning," continued Alisette, after a pause, "drove me on in the roaring stream. The manager only provided for the most necessary wants; in all other respects, he gave promises of Moscow—perhaps merely to cut off every other resource from us. The proximity of the army, the resting-places at night, which were often of the strangest kind, the necessity of being constantly amongst men, induced me to adopt male attire. I considered it a piece of good fortune that I succeeded in getting a place on the baggage-wagon of a general—for I then passed for one of his servants—consequently, the journey became less inconvenient. A few days after the battle, we passed through still smoking Smolensko. Then, for the first time, I gained sight of the horrors of war. Almost benumbed with terror, I tremblingly passed through the streets, strewed on either side with half-burned corpses and human limbs.—I had finally to close my eyes from these terrible objects. But these scenes were renewed daily. I have seen perhaps, things more frightful than you have, for when you proceed on the road of victory, you do not cast your eye back upon the tracks the monster of war leaves behind him. I have seen them, these unhappy creatures, alongside the road, these pale spectres with sunken eyes, who wailed forth their gloomy complaints! I have seen them, and had to pass without being able to render them assistance. And through this desert, filled with misery and horror, I was driven by my fate! Every step of the tired horses made return more impossible.—The stream advanced slowly; I saw that it carried me towards an abyss. But was I able to return alone on a road where every one of my footsteps would have touched a human being in the agonies of death? How could I, a weak girl, have found the way back, where thousands of men, accustomed to the hardships of war, have perished, through their strength having forsaken them? Almost despairing at the continued horror which filled my soul, I finally floated calmly on the wave of fate, supporting the gloomy despondency into which I had sunk. I thought no more of resistance. Thus I heard the thunder of the terrible battle; thus with my face covered, I rode over the field of death, from which already a poisonous smell arose; thus finally, dear friend, I to-day reached this city. As

every one here indifferently occupied the empty dwellings, I also came to this palace, the front wing of which is occupied by two ladies, whose fate is the same as my own, but who bear it with more tranquillity—I ought to say with light-minded carelessness. Thus, then, I was the most abandoned being in this immense city, in this great empire, from the first moment I entered it. An hour ago I dared to leave my seclusion; a good star directed you toward me; the rest I need not tell you," she added in a lower tone, as she confusedly bent her lovely head.

This wonderful adventure, the solitary secret place, the loveliness which appeared even in the slightest motion, and in the tones of Françoise Alisette's voice, the captivating relation and lively description, the thought of her female helplessness in the colossal movements of war, where ever the single man is lost in the immeasurable field of action—but above all, the irresistible charm of tears from a beautiful eye,—all this pressed so powerfully upon Jaromir's youthful heart, that it became encircled in the purple net which the lovely girl had thrown over him, even before he suspected it. From the confidence which she gave him, he grew daring in what otherwise would have been inconsistent with his nature. It seemed to him as if she had put her whole fate into his hands—as if he were now the master of all her actions and will. With a sudden impulse, he pressed his lips upon her hand, and drew the resisting girl nearer, his glowing cheek touching that of Alisette's. He trembled in the sweet pleasure of love. She too trembled in the arm he had cast around her slender figure.

"Sweet, charming being," said he tenderly, in a low voice, "be my sister—I will be your brother. Wipe away your tears, and think no more of your fate; all is now over!"

"Oh, what un hoped-for happiness!" exclaimed Alisette. She hid her charming face in Jaromir's breast—like a bashful, flying dove she clung to him, and he held her in his embrace, in the proud conviction of his manly protection.

"You have seen my bride later than I," said he, after some minutes, "O, speak of her to me! Was she as sad as her letters tell?"

At the word bride, Alisette shrunk convulsively back; a quick oppressed "Ah!" burst from her lips. "The beautiful Countess Lodoiska I have only seldom seen," said she, with painful emphasis. "The day following the march, she was at the ball in the Saxonian palace, where I had to appear and sing in the concert."

"At the ball!" murmured Jaromir, with an expression which plainly showed that this information was equally unexpected and disagreeable to him.

"Prince Lichnowski conducted her."

"Did she dance with him?" asked Jaromir, quickly.

"With him alone but little. They sat mostly in a niche of the window, talking. They also drove home soon, as the Prince intended to take supper with the Countess."

Jaromir was silent. A flush of anger mantled his cheeks, but he mastered his temper and the jealousy which rose within him. No!—he thought—she surely loves you, and her sadness is as true as her letters describe. Why should she not accept the company of one of the most familiar friends of the house? Should she stay away from a public festival, which had, perhaps, even a patriotic character? You are unjust Jaromir, both to her and yourself!

In his open features, Françoise read what was passing in his breast.

"You are distracted, dear friend," she said, in a tone of compassion; "the recollection of your beautiful bride must certainly be touching. Does she often write to you?"

"Since the day preceding the battle I have had no letters. Her last was dated Toplitz; but she writes often, and with the most tender friendship."

The last words he spoke with emotion; it was like a prayer to excuse his suspicions. But suddenly the thought struck him: "Why did she not write that she had been at the ball?" All else that happened to her she has most accurately described, informed me of her occupation day after day—why——"

Alisette interrupted him in these thoughts.

"How much I wished to have taken leave of the Countess and your bride! But it was impossible. Thrice I was announced, but found no one at home. The porter informed me that they had gone to the country, from whence they would only return at a late hour; and the next morning I was awakened by the rolling of their travelling-carriage."

"To the country?" said Jaromir in astonishment, for he had not been informed of that either. "Whither? Do you know the place?"

"No," replied Alisette, evidently confused and pausing; "it is difficult for me to recollect Polish names."

"Perhaps Wiktolsky, the domain of her uncle? Or Pulawy, where the Princess Czartowski resides?"

By a motion of her hand Alisette replied in the negative.

"But whom to visit? You certainly know the name of the proprietor?"

"The porter did not know," replied Alisette.

"That is impossible, dearest! If he knew the place he must also have known the proprietor. I conjure you, girl, to speak the

truth," he added, with renewed warmth. Alisette shrunk tremblingly back.

"Good God!"

"The truth! Was it Czarnowriki?"

"I believe it was."

"There lives Lichnowski!" exclaimed Jaromir, furiously jumping up. "She is as faithless and false as was ever woman. She has hidden this visit from me, which she would not have done had it been an innocent one. She sent me a journal—she rendered an account of every hour, of every minute. A saint could not have led a more pure, quiet, and virgin life. Oh, the hypocrite!"

Tears rolled down the cheeks of the youth; impatiently he wiped them off, and stamped with his foot upon the ground.

"It seems worth while for a man to weep for her, like a boy!"

But his tears only fell the more abundantly.

Without daring to speak a word, and trembling in every limb, Alisette remained seated. She looked like a child who has caused a great misfortune, without knowing it, and who, grown pale from fright, without daring to interfere, tremblingly looks at the growing consequences.

"Be calm!" she implored, in a mild voice; "sit down by me again. Perhaps you do great injustice to the poor girl."

"No!" exclaimed he violently, "I do not do her injustice. Unknowingly you, kind girl, have betrayed to me more than you suspect. Now tell me the whole truth. What more do you know?"

"Indeed nothing," she replied.

"Alisette!" said Jaromir passionately, taking both her hands, and resuming his seat, "Alisette, you have implored my protection and assistance; now I want your confidence in return. Tell me all—all you know or think!"

"I certainly know nothing; and what I think, alas!—I dare not think!"

"Tell me only one thing," said he, with barely suppressed anger; "did Prince Lichnowski follow the Countess to Toplitz?"

"He left on the same day," answered Alisette, tremblingly.

"Oh! you are kind; you would not have betrayed me thus!" he exclaimed, in a soft voice, with his left arm pressing the hardly resisting girl to his breast. "But I will forget her! She shall not have the triumph of seeing a man weep for her! In the battle I thought only of her; her sorrowing image alone stood before my soul. I saw neither horror nor danger. Death seemed sweet to me. Oh! how foolish to me was this aspiration!"

In proportion as Jaromir's conviction of the infidelity of his betrothed increased, did an excited passion for Alisette fill his breast. He pressed burning kisses upon the lips of

the too loving girl, and her resistance died away before them.

The dark figure of his evil demon stepped before him, raised a threatening hand, and held it over his head. One step more and the cold touch falls upon thy head!—the poisonous breath enters thy breast! Is no kind genius near? Does not the pure figure of thy bride step between thee and her?

"Will you be mine?—eternally mine?" exclaimed Jaromir with the most passionate tenderness. "Can you pardon him who misunderstood you—who blindly shut his eyes to the gem in your heart? Alisette, I must atone for this great injustice. Pardon the blind!"

"Oh! incomprehensible mercy of heaven!" exclaimed Alisette, submitting to his embrace. Her bosom heaved, her lips pressed her lover's, her breath died away in his kiss. Jaromir trembled with rapture. Till now he had only known the pure flame of love, and feeling from afar its mild, ennobling warmth, adored it. Daringly he now stepped too near the sanctuary. Like glowing metal the fire raged through his veins—blind ecstasy succeeded—and all was hushed.

With a shudder Alisette awoke and wished to tear herself from the arms of her lover, but he would not loose her.

"You are mine for ever!" he exclaimed, conjuringly raising his right hand towards heaven; "that I have sworn! And I will keep my oath. Take then, faithful, loving one, the ring of the traitress! This ring shall be the pledge of our union. It has been sacredly consummated, and is inviolable!"

He drew Lodoiska's ring from his finger and placed it on that of Alisette. Speechlessly she hung on his breast.

"Oh! I am a sinner; but you, you are the guilty cause of it. For your sake I have received this sin upon my soul. You will not abandon me!"

Weeping, she hid her head in her dress.

The high-rising flame had sunk. Jaromir now saw how much had been destroyed by its violence. A cold feeling of sadness now crept into his soul.

"Love you?" he exclaimed with heartfelt melancholy. "Without you, earth has no charms left for me! you are the only star which shines upon me. Should you—no, no!—you will always shine for me, dearest! Your tender heart has healed the wound which a poisonous traitress tore in my heart! Ah! you were my good angel in that terrible moment!"

The gloomy knell of the tower-bell, which announced the ninth hour, aroused the two lovers.

"You must go," said Alisette, springing up; "were you to be found here, I should be lost!"

"Lost! Who dares to interrupt us?"

"For God's sake, hush!—I hear a noise! it is the corridor door. We are in the dark—if any one should come! Dearest, if my life, my honor be dear to you, leave me now! You know not what a female heart feels. Shame would crush me, if the women—oh! I implore you, I beseech you, fly! There is still time! Here, through this door, down into the garden!"

She herself put the sabre which he had taken off into his hand, and with entreating words pressed him to go.

"Bashful roe!" said he, smiling; "how charming is this fear! Be quiet—you can still raise your eye before those who are spotless! Your soul is still pure; your heart yet a virgin sanctuary!"

"Oh, then spare my heart!" she faltered. "If you love me, go! Let this be the first proof you give me!"

He embraced her once more, kissed her brow with melancholy tenderness, and hastened through the tapestried door.

"Farewell! To-morrow! to-morrow!" Alisette whispered in a tender voice, and disappeared.

Unseen he reached the garden. He wished now to make trial whether it really adjoined the street in which his bivouac lay; so shaped his course through the dark walks. In a few minutes he reached the wall, and after a short search found the porch, which was only fastened on the inside. He quickly drew back the old rusty bolt, and really found himself on the place he supposed—about a hundred steps from the watch-fires of his men. This secret path was to him a reward from heaven—a new sign of his protecting Deity.

CHAPTER LIV.

WHEN Bernard became calmer, Rasinski and Louis insisted that he should relate the whole story. In his rough, good-humored manner he recounted the incidents of the sojourn in Warsaw, and the adventure of the ring.

Bernard now left the room.

Louis betook himself to Mary's letter a second time, absorbed in thought over the new turns the stream of his life had taken. Rasinski, filled with deep thoughts, walked up and down the apartment.

It now struck nine.

"Bernard is right," said Rasinski; "exhausted nature must not remain overpowered. We must lie down and repose. Who knows if we shall not be interrupted during the night? for, to tell the truth, I do not see

quite at ease in this abandoned city. The Grecian fleet left Troy only to return during the night."

These words reminded Louis of the observations Bernard had made; forgotten through the unexpected news from Germany. He related to Rasinski what Bernard had seen.

"Hem! In that case we cannot possibly have anything hostile to expect," he replied. "Probably they are frightened servants, or old sick persons who, being unable to fly now, hide themselves for fear of us. Rostopchin describes us in all his proclamations as murderers and abusers of the temples; we cannot therefore be angry at the poor people dreading us and hiding from us, as if we were monsters. Let us leave them in peace, at least for this night. To-morrow I will order the whole castle to be searched. The watches at the gate, my servants, who sleep in the ante-chamber, and ourselves are sufficient security. Good night, Louis! I think to-morrow will decide something."

In passing through the long saloon separating his sleeping apartment from that of Rasinski, Louis almost felt a tremor at finding himself alone, where the least sound, the slightest motion resounded from the high vaulted walls. The door between his and Bernard's room was open. He looked in. Bernard was not there.

Louis went and looked forth from the corridor window, whence he saw his comrades lying in deep sleep around the fires. One officer only was awake, walking with rapid and impatient steps to and fro. By the light of the fire Louis recognised Jaromir.

"What do you there?" Louis uttered softly.

"Alas! Louis, is it you?" replied Jaromir, recognising his friend. "You come just in time. Would you like to read a letter from Lodoiska? Half-an-hour ago Boleslaus handed one to me, on returning from a walk through the city. Have you had letters?"

"Yes, important ones, and of the strangest kind."

"Mine is of the strangest kind too. There, read it."

"You forget, my dear fellow, that I do not understand Polish sufficiently. Read it to me yourself."

"Read! Ah!" sighed he, heavily, passing his hand several times over his eyes.

"You are ill, friend?"

"Exhausted. The wild soldier's life sometimes distresses me. I cannot, indeed, read the letter to you. The fire blinds me too much; my eyes pain me. To-morrow, perhaps."

"You are in a very sad humor to-night," returned Louis, mildly. "Did you receive unpleasant news? Rasinski did not tell us about it, although he had letters from his sister."

"From his sister? What can she write to him? Alas! Louis, would that I had fallen in the redoubt with so many of our comrades!"

"Gracious God!" exclaimed Louis, in alarm, "what is it? What does Lodoiska write? Tell me, at least, though you cannot read!"

"No, I will read, should my eyes burst in the effort!" These words he uttered violently, and drawing a letter from his pocket, opened it. He beckoned Louis to come down to the watch-fire, and then read as follows:—

"**MY ONLY BELOVED FRIEND**—We return at last to our native city. A few minutes more and we are on the way to Warsaw. Then again I shall be for a few days nearer to you, who always recede farther and farther. Oh! my beloved, when will this terrible war end? When will you return from the far desert whither the storm has blown you? With what boundless love will these arms receive you! Alas! Jaromir, I have often sad, fearful hours, when I think that a gloomy fate may step between us and our happiness. The most ardent prayer to the Holy Virgin is then my only consolation. All that the kind friends who surround me do to solace me does not touch my breast, but prayer enters my inmost heart. Be likewise pious, my Jaromir. Do not forget that sacred voice in the breast which impels us humbly to the feet of the Almighty—the Merciful! For, who shall protect you in the storm of battle if His face is turned away from you? Dear Jaromir, lay open your pure soul before our Heavenly Father. Do not scorn the weakness of the girl who engages you to pious belief, because she finds her sole consolation in it. I know well that man considers himself sufficiently strong without divine assistance; but, dearest, this is a delusion. Before Him the powerful are weak. I feel myself strong, invincible when, after ardent prayer, the hand of the Almighty rests upon me. Then my gloomy dreams and forebodings vanish—then I see the angel of the Lord guiding and protecting you with shield and sword—then the sun of a blissful future shines upon me; and although gloomy hours return afterwards, as night follows the day, yet the brilliant stars shine through the darkness, and the horizon remains in its golden morning glory. Soon, dearest, I shall be nearer to you, in our native city, where everything, even the sound of our language, reminds me of you. There I shall be by far more happy than here. The carriage is just entering the gate. My heart beats with joy and longing. Farewell!—farewell! May a thousand angels protect you, and happily lead you home!"

"**YOUR LODOISKA.**"

"A noble, excellent girl! Love, piety, in-

nocence, truth!" exclaimed Louis, as Jaromir concluded. The latter embraced him and convulsively pressed his glowing face against the bosom of his friend. Louis did not suspect what kindled this terrible fire in his breast. He thought it was the longing for his bride and for home.

"Compose yourself, friend," he said mildly; "the day will come when you will see her again, and perhaps it is not far distant."

Jaromir stood without saying a word. A tumult worked in his breast. "Miserable thou art!" said his conscience;—"wretched if this be not the language of truth; doubly miserable if it be!"

As he continued silent, Louis to give a turn to the scene, asked after Bernard.

"I have not seen him," answered Jaromir, striking his head; "I have seen no one—nothing! Louis! I must leave you! I must be alone! I pray you leave me to myself!"

Louis looked after the young man with emotion, as he watched him with quick steps hurrying down the street.

Slowly he then returned to his room. He repaired to the window once more. A gloomy, murky glow was seen in the midst of the dark figures who reposed on the ground.—Their deep, heavy breathing was heard at a distance; even the fire-watchers were nodding. Deathlike silence reigned throughout this whole immense city.

CHAPTER LV.

FINALLY, sleep overpowered Louis also; he closed the window, wrapped his cloak closely around him, and threw himself upon a sofa standing in one corner of the room.—Anxiety for Bernard and Jaromir kept him awake for some time. But gradually he lost himself in the regions of dreamland.

He dreamt that he was engaged in battle, fighting, surrounded by enemies. A figure opened in heaven—it was his mother, who beckoned him to follow her. She led him into her comfortable parlor, and said:

"Where have you been so long?"

He felt the joy of return. He saw her on the promenade in Pillnitz—the gay friends of his youth accompanied him. Suddenly, Mary and Bianca approached him, leaning like sisters on each other's arms.

"Yes, yes, love each other, dearest objects I possess on earth!" he murmured in his sleep, while a smile played upon his dormant lip. He wished to approach and give them his hand; but a stranger held him back. It was Rasinski, who told him to take to his horse quickly. The lovely figures disappeared,

he found himself in the bustle and tumult of the march.

Innumerable lines of soldiers passed him; he joined them, but new figures still continually rose up at his side and pressed onward. Halts and advances were made at the same time—as the double and contradictory in a dream often does. He now thought that he entered Moscow with Bernard and Rasinski, and rode through the streets, which, in immeasurable length, were spread out before him. The houses and palaces whirled before his eyes; ever was the one he occupied before him; but new streets, before he could reach it, continually rose up between.—With every step the distance seemed to increase. Finally, Rasinski, Bernard, and himself reached the gate; they alighted and ascended the stairs. In exhaustion, he laid himself down in the same room, and upon the same couch on which he really reposed.—Dreams and reality began to mix confusedly together. He heard the call of the sentry from the street, and awoke. But as his disturbed vision saw only the same objects—as the reflection of the watch-fires still illuminated the room—as his waking ear still heard the same sounds as when sleeping—he soon fell back into the embraces of Morpheus. Thus, between dreaming and waking, he saw the door of his room slowly open and a veiled figure in mourning enter, that carried a dim-burning lamp in its hand. Like a spectre, it totteringly approached the bed, and with its right hand it raised the veil which covered its face. The light of the lamp fell full upon the countenance—it was Bianca!—but with pale and sorrowful features.

"Where is Mary?" asked Louis? "and why dost thou appear in those weeds, dearest? Alas! dost thou also weep for my mother?"

With a painful eagerness he stretched out his hand towards the figure. Mute and trembling, it stood before him. It seemed as if she desired to bend over him; but suddenly shrank back, held her hand remonstratingly before her, and slowly shook her head.

"Would you fly? Why do you scorn me, charming vision?" said Louis, in the dawning confusion of the dream. "Do not appear, if you would leave me so quickly!"

He shuddered; the night-frost touched and shook him; he wrapped himself up close in his cloak.

The vision had vanished; but through the darkness of the night the dreamer heard the words:

"Fly! fly! Danger threatens your life under this roof! Take this as your warning!"

He felt a touch on his cheek; he awoke,—but the whole picture of his dream lay before him as if in a cloud. Bianca's figure had disappeared like a shadow. He tried to collect his broken senses when a shot from

the adjoining room was heard. This martial sound immediately roused him from his slumbers ; he thoroughly awakened and sprang up. At that moment, he heard Rasinski's voice in the adjoining room, calling to him and Bernard. He hurried into the saloon, which was lit, not only by the reflection of the fires from the street, but also by a night-lamp. Rasinski advanced with hasty steps to meet him, and almost at the same moment, the men who had been awakened by the report, rushed in from the ante-chamber.

"Lights ! lights !" called Rasinski. They hurried to obey the order.

"What is it ? What has happened ?" asked Louis.

"We are haunted ! have you seen nothing ?"

"Nothing in the least, but——"

"A black figure, to all appearance a woman, has but now passed through my room!"

"How ?" exclaimed Louis, in a startling accent, "a dark veiled figure ?"

"The same."

"And this you really saw ? It was no vision ?" asked Louis.

"No, by heaven ! for I was then as much awake as I am at this moment," replied Rasinski. "I thought that I heard some one lightly pass by my bed, and I awoke ; for you know that I am a light sleeper. I saw a shadow glide along the wall, while a dim ray of light seemed to fall into the room through the open door of the saloon. After all, I concluded it to be the flitting reflection of the fires in the street. I had wrapped myself up, and once more closed my eyes, when I heard the same low rustling as before. I jumped up ; the same black, veiled figure passed close by my bed. Who goes there ? I exclaimed. The figure visibly shrank back, but did not answer ;—with quick steps it hurried through the room. 'Answer, or I fire !' I exclaimed, and seized my pistols."

"Almighty God !" exclaimed Louis, involuntarily falling upon Rasinski's arm, as if to prevent such an act.

"I fired. The report was followed by an exclamation from a female voice."

"She is killed !" cried Louis, rushing towards Rasinski's apartment.

But the latter, now for the first time remarking the excitement of his friend, held him back, quickly adding :

"It was only an exclamation of fright. Immediately afterwards I heard a door quickly open and shut. I jumped out of the bed, and hurried towards the mysterious apparition ; but whether the flash and smoke of the shot had blinded me, or the darkness of the room favored the escape of the visitor, it at all events vanished, as though sunk in the earth. This way she cannot have fled, for she had not time to reach the door."

The servant soon returned with candles, whereupon Rasinski repaired to his chamber, to commence a close search. Louis with tumultuous feelings accompanied him. The room was found empty. There were two doors in it—one leading into the saloon, the other conducting to the other apartments. But this latter was closed by two arm-chairs which stood in the same position as on the preceding evening ; and no one could have made their exit that way, without either having overthrown or pushed them aside. The servants were assured that no one had entered the chamber from the saloon, as they had slept immediately before the door, rendering it necessary to step over them, either in entering or retiring. In the direction where Rasinski had fired at the vision, there was no door ; it was that corner of the room which was not on the side of the saloon, but on that of the other apartments. Rasinski attentively examined the tapestry.

"There is my shot !" he said, pointing to an abrasion in the wall, where the ball was still sticking. "Consequently I did not deceive myself ! A secret door must be here !"

In curiosity all stood around him—Louis' heart beating with indefinable dread. Suddenly it occurred to his mind that all he believed himself to have dreamt might have been "a dream which was not all a dream."

"Take this as your warning !" were the words of the apparition.

He quickly took a lamp and hurried back to his room. His first glance fell upon the sofa—he discovered nothing—but when he cast his eyes around, he discovered something white lying on the floor, near the window. He took it up ; it was a veil. When the web touched his hand, he immediately felt the same touch which had before so wonderfully surprised him. He spread it open ; the end was drawn through a kind of ring ; he quickly opened it ; gold became visible, and a green stone glittered before his eye.

"Gracious God ! is it possible !" he exclaimed, and warm tears streamed down his cheeks. He had the same bracelet in his hand which the long lost Bianca had dropped at the foot of the St. Bernard ; the same dear treasure to which he was indebted for the first sight of her adorable countenance. Wild with excitement, he was about hurrying to Rasinski, when he observed a slip of paper pinned to the veil. In trembling haste he took out the gold pin fastening the missive, unfolded it, and in extreme agitation read these words :

" You were once my preserver. You protected me with brotherly love and fidelity. Who can unravel the wonderful designs of Providence, which then united, afterwards

separated, now re-unite, and soon will tear us asunder forever? But the moments are dear. Leave this house quickly—immediately! The greatest danger threatens you! The abyss of destruction yawns under your feet—the soil which you tread is only a thin covering of it—one moment too late, and it breaks! More I dare not reveal. Alas! this already is considered a great crime! but a greater law of thankfulness commanded me to commit it. The future is darkly veiled—the waves of my life are roaring in the tempest. Whatever my fate may be, with sisterly faithfulness my heart shall always retain the recollection of my noble friend!

"BIANCA."

Louis stood, hardly able to command his senses, staring fixedly upon the paper, when Rasinski entered.

"Where are you?" he asked. "We have discovered a door; I have sent for an axe to open it, for it is necessary that this affair should be explained. But has Bernard not returned yet?—What is it? what is the inatter with you?" he asked with surprise, as Louis stood motionless, extending him the slip of paper.

Rasinski quickly read it.

"I believe that higher powers are engaged here!" he exclaimed, after the perusal; "a more wonderful event never happened to me. But danger! what danger threatens us?" Verbally this sentence cannot possibly be understood! We must follow the mysterious apparition. Come, let us mutually seek to unravel this thread!"

Rasinski drew Louis along. In his room they already found the assistants engaged in prying open the door with an axe. After a short effort it gave way.

"Now be resolute, but cautious!" said Rasinski. Seizing a light with his left hand and a pistol with his right, he proceeded.

They found themselves in a narrow, low corridor, sufficiently wide and high to admit a tall person. It seemed to be made within the wall itself, running parallel with the broader corridor outside; but it sank perceptibly down, in some places precipitously so.

"There's a smell of fire and brimstone here!" said Rasinski, after advancing about thirty paces; "do you detect it?"

"Nothing surer!" replied one of the servants. "Something gleams too, forward there!"

Twenty steps further, and they were met by a thick, sulphurous smoke, causing the flame of the lamp to turn into a sickly hue.

"Should the warning be as dangerous as that paper tells us," said Rasinski, in a low tone, turning to Louis, "I think it is unadvisable to go farther!"

Louis, whose heart beat in the hope of finding a trace of his visitor, replied:

"As yet we may well dare to advance, for the retreat is not cut off. Let me lead, colonel!"

"No; it is better that I go first," replied Rasinski; "eagerness might entice you to act unreasonably, and forget the necessary caution."

They penetrated about twenty steps further; the sulphurous mist became thicker and thicker; it could scarcely be breathed. Suddenly a blast of wind met them as if a door had opened somewhere; at the same time the three lights which they carried went out. The next instant was heard a resounding blow which shook the whole building.

"That was a mine!" exclaimed Rasinski, "we must return!"

Even Louis now perceived that it was impossible to advance. They turned to find their way back, but in a few moments such a dense smoke and suffocating heat attacked them that they could with great difficulty breathe.

"Quick! quick!" exclaimed Rasinski.

Holding their handkerchiefs close to their mouths, they plunged forward to reach Rasinski's room, upon gaining which they found little relief, for it was also filled with dense vapor. Rasinski hastened to the window and with his pistol struck the frame. The glass fell rattling into the street, and thus let in the pure air. Louis ran to the door of the saloon, but here too, the smoke pervaded, issuing apparently from the floor. However, the lamp was still burning, enabling him to reach his own room and seize his arms, cloak and saddle-bag. The veil, bracelet and handkerchief of Bianca he had already thrust in his breast. He hurried back to Rasinski.

From the street "Fire! Fire!" now resounded, followed by the roll of the drums of the bivouac, to which the yelling trumpets joined their hasty harsh notes.

Rasinski, Louis and the servants, hurried down the large staircase into the street. At the porch Bernard joined them in full haste from the rear of the mansion.

"God be praised! you are safe!" he exclaimed. "I feared that I had come too late!"

The whole danger could now well be seen. A black impenetrable cloud hung over the palace; red spiral flashes shot through it. Dense smoke poured from almost every window; from the lower story, it rolled in thick clouds, ascending in a high column towards the roof. A single glance told the truth: the fire was the work of incendiarism.

In trembling amazement all stood awaiting the end of the scene.

Rasinski ordered his men under arms, and the roll of the drum to be called. All were present.

"There is as yet no wind," he said; "the flame is somewhat smothered, and we may yet for a while remain."

He called Jaromir, whom he commanded to ride immediately to the Kremlin and inform the Adjutant-general of the Emperor. The young officer dashed away at a gallop.

With the excitement of awe the troops looked upon the building, expecting every moment the flames to break through. Suddenly a brilliant glare fell over the whole palace, as if illuminated by the quick-rising sun. The sky shone in red brightness, as a sea of fire vaulted over them. Rasinski rode down the street to the garden-wall, whence he could obtain a better view all around.

"Gracious God!" he exclaimed with horror, as he saw another large building near the Kremlin, from whose high roof the flames were just breaking forth. "That is no accident! Incarnate devils are at work here!"

He was about to ride back when Bernard came up with the information that a magazine was burning at the end of the street.

Now Rasinski was convinced—now, all depended on resolute action.

"Whence does the wind come?" he asked, looking around.

"I think from the southwest!" replied Bernard.

"Good!—but it seems to be wavering. We must retreat!"

Until now everything had been hushed. All at once in the distance, from all sides, drums and trumpets were heard. A bustle followed, as if some camp had been surprised. Cavalry mounted their horses—infantry took to their arms and hurried into line.

Meanwhile, the dreadful element burst forth in every direction; the wind increased in strength—driving the fire like a burning sea over the town. Now bodies of men wrapped in the darkness of impenetrable smoke, pressed into the narrow streets, not easily to find an outlet. Anon flashed an illumination as in broad day. Arms glittered in the reflection as if dipped into the fresh blood of the enemy.

Rasinski and his men reached a street yet unscathed. The height of the houses on both sides likewise prevented the reflection from being as glaring as before; they struggled in a kind of twilight, yet the sky was covered with clouds of smoke streaked with fire. At the end of the street was a bridge, for the moment choked up by the artillery retreating hurriedly to save the munitions and powder wagons carelessly left in the city. Rasinski commanded a halt.

"Said I not," whispered Rasinski to Bernard and Louis, "that we should see no end to misfortune? I wish Jaromir were back—he may not find us again!"

"I will go in search of him!" said Bernard with animation.

"That would not help him, and only add to my solicitude. You gave me trouble enough by your disappearance last evening. Where were you then?"

"In the garden. I found it impossible to sleep. Besides I made a discovery, which though of no use to us now, yet throws some light on this terrible business."

All listened with intense anxiety.

"I was on the eve of returning to the palace," commenced Bernard, "for midnight had passed, but in passing through the walk which leads to the portal, I suddenly saw a light glimmer through the bushes. It was a figure wrapped in a cloak carrying a lantern. At first I believed it some one in search of me, yet I thought it expedient for me to hide behind a tree until I knew who was approaching; for during the day I had made certain discoveries in the castle."

"We know about that," interrupted Rasinski.

"From my hiding-place I saw that the figure with the lantern was followed by several others. They turned from the side walk into the main one and approached. They numbered ten. The man with the lantern was foremost; after him followed a man closely wrapped up in a cloak, and supporting a veiled lady; the rest of the group pressed close after. These last appeared to be servants—two women among them; one young and charming, but the other tall and fantastically dressed, indeed the very picture of the furious woman we saw on the walls of the Kremlin. The last four were men, who carried something on their shoulders I could not recognise, but which looked like a wrapped-up human body. Having passed, I returned to the castle. When half-way there I became aware of a smell of pitch and brimstone. Hem! thought I, these must be the devil's children. Suddenly the earth trembled beneath my feet, and a deep, heavy noise shook the silent night. I comprehended all. Swift as lightning I hurried towards the building, and emerging from the bushes I discovered it on fire. I was running to give the alarm when I met you."

"Oh! Bernard —"

"Forward!" shouted Rasinski, interrupting Louis, "the passage is clear!"

Arrived on the bridge, all could again look around. The fire was fast creeping westward, the reflection showing brilliantly in the dark river.

"The wind shifts!" said Rasinski, watch-

ing the direction of the smoke, and flames. "See how the sparks fly over the Kremlin! We must again change our course."

An aid now arrived at full gallop, and in a loud voice shouted:

"The cavalry and artillery through the gate on the road to Petersburgh!"

He then turned his horse to carry the order to other corps he might meet in the streets.

"Well, at least we know what we have to do," said Rasinski; "I confess that I was at a loss how to act."

They turned into a street which conducted to the desired gate; but they soon found themselves in the midst of confusion. Columns of infantry, with the bearded *sappeurs* at their head, were coming at a quick pace.

"Give way! give way!" exclaimed the leader, pressing forward with his men.

Thus the cavalry, pushed aside, could only advance step by step. Meanwhile the flames behind them spread awfully. Black and glowing clouds whirled high over the spires of the palaces, hiding the sky and its stars.

But the streets were not darkened. Houses and pavements glowed, as if illuminated by the blood-red torches of the furies. The storm raised by the sea of fire fell with a raging burst on the glowing waves, and carried onward sparks, embers, and ashes, which poured down like thick rain.

Thus was a great event, in all its gigantic majesty, displayed to the eye of man in his weakness.

CHAPTER LVI.

AT full speed Jaromir rode through the streets towards the gate of the Kremlin. A singular fear came over him as he rode alone through the abandoned city. No second fire had been discovered by him yet, no flames had yet burst from the roofs of other buildings; still he had a dark foreboding of the truth, and the black stone walls of the city appeared to him like a cold, broken sea of lava, which would suddenly open its subterraneous depths to swallow them up.

His way lay through narrow, crooked streets, the high houses of which prevented a distant view for some time; but on reaching an open space, he saw the ruddy smoke rising in three different places at once, and suddenly a brilliant light fell on his path.

They were the first flames breaking through the roof of the bazaar. Soon the sky reddened in other places, and before he had reached the Kremlin he heard the drums of the soldiers stationed there. An aid came

galloping past him; he called out to learn to whom he must make his report.

"All is prepared," the officer replied. "The Emperor has been informed—Marshal Mortier is in motion. We are carrying the order for the cavalry and artillery to leave the city as soon as possible. The *sappeurs*, miners, and infantry, on the contrary, are to assemble and assist in extinguishing the fire. All reports are to be made to Marshal Mortier."

Jaromir saw that he could do nothing better than ride back and inform Rasinski of these orders. He set out with speed, but quickly lost himself in a labyrinth of streets. Finally, he reached an open place as bright as day. With surprise he observed that he was close to the spot where his bivouac lay, having struck it from a different side. The burning building on his right was the same which Rasinski had occupied; the flames flew high over the roof—the smoke whirling in thick clouds over the opposite houses, and covering the entire view on that side. Of troops nothing more could be seen; but by the still burning bivouac fires, Jaromir saw that their march had been hurried.

The unhappy humor in which he had lately been thrown had been momentarily chased away by the more portentous scene, but now, with the flames in twenty different places, fears for Alisette filled his breast.

"Has she been warned? Has she fled in time?" were his shuddering ejaculations.

He rode at full speed towards the gate of the garden. It was too narrow to ride through. Quickly he jumped down from his horse and opened the gate. Now he plainly saw that the palace was lost, although the flames had not gained full power yet. Without caring for his horse, he quickly ran through the shrubbery to reach the walk which led direct through the park.

Breathlessly he reached the end of the garden. The palace stood before him silent and lonely; no one seemed to have been awakened throughout its wide walls—no one suspected the danger. The occupants had then either fled, or slept to wake in destruction.

Without stopping, but with a heart painfully beating for his beloved, Jaromir threw himself into this crater of death—ran up the stairs, and stood now before the door of a room. It was locked. He knocked—no answer. Alisette might sleep in the adjoining room, and did not hear him; with a violent kick he burst open the door.

"Alisette!" he exclaimed. "Alisette! Where are you?"

All remained silent. Had she escaped, or would he still find her in another room?

By the light of the fire which streamed

through the high trees, he sought and found the door of the adjoining apartment. He entered ; here too, all was silent, but a night-lamp was burning on a table in the corner. This he took up and advanced. All remained silent ; nothing was heard even of the continually increasing noise in the streets.

Jaromir's suspicion that Alisette still slept was nowise abated. He quickly glanced round the apartment, then passed through it. He opened the door of a second chamber and looked in. Here he saw a bed with closed silk curtains. A secret shudder ran through his veins.

"Alisette ! Alisette !" he exclaimed wildly.

"Who is there ?" asked a voice, with a tone of sudden fear.

"Alisette, I come to save you—the palace is in flames !"

With these words he approached the bed whence the voice came.

"Back ! back !" cried the girl, holding the curtains tightly with one hand, and stretching forth the other against her lover's nearer approach. Jaromir thought that this fear was created by a feeling of bashfulness. He had no time to conquer it, however, for a manly voice the next moment exclaimed :

"What the devil is all this ?"

Jaromir stood paralysed. Alisette uttered a loud scream. At the same moment the man jumped out of the bed.

"Who breaks in here ?" he demanded, shaking with rage ; but before Jaromir could answer, Alisette threw herself at his feet and embraced his knees, exclaiming :

"Do not condemn me ! I am innocent !"

In stupid amazement Jaromir stood benumbed—crushed. Alisette convulsively clung to his knees. Her dishevelled hair fell over her naked shoulders and heaving bosom.

"I will not rise before you have pardoned me !" she exclaimed, pressing her face to the floor. "And if you will not, then trample me under your feet, that I may die on the spot !"

Jaromir neither saw nor heard. A rough hand now took his arm and shook him violently.

"I demand an instant explanation, Count !" said the man.

Bewildered, Jaromir looked around. Flame was just breaking through the roof of an adjacent building. By its light he recognised Colonel Regnard standing before him in a cloak with which he had quickly enveloped himself. The young man shrank back ; Alisette, half-fainting, sank upon the floor.

"I demand again what brings you here," cried the Colonel furiously ; "answer me, if you are not a coward !"

Regnard did not think that danger from

fire was so near ; he saw it certainly, but like an old soldier, took little heed.

Alisette now sprang up in alarm. She threw herself between Jaromir and the Colonel, and wringing her hands, exclaimed :

"For heaven's sake, let us fly !—I will confess all !"

But with a dreadful burst of rage, Jaromir seized the naked arm of the praying girl—shock her as the lion would shake a roe, and exclaimed :

"Confess, wretch ! Didst thou calumniate Lodoiska ?"

"Pardon ! Mercy !" tremblingly cried the temptress, and would have thrown herself again on her knees at his feet. But furiously Jaromir dashed her from him, causing her to fall upon the bed, while he exclaimed :

"Accursed viper ! Fly, that I may not become thy murderer !"

Regnard seized his arm, but the superior strength of Jaromir's youthful powers overcame it.

"We shall meet again ; now save yourself ; for the palace is burning—"

A subterraneous explosion cut short the last words. The palace trembled—the windows rattled, and stones fell from the shaken roof.

"Hell and the devil ! What is that ?" exclaimed Regnard.

"Almighty God !" exclaimed Alisette, wringing her hands.

"To such as thee, God shows no mercy !" cried Jaromir, threateningly raising his hand. "These vaults fall in over thy crimes, and the flames of hell will take hold of thee !"

"Mercy ! mercy ! Save me !" cried the miserable woman, approaching Jaromir ; but she was unable to stand on her feet, and fell to the floor.

"We cannot let her perish !" said Regnard resolutely ; "help me to carry her down."

He tried to raise her ; Jaromir stood gazing like a statue upon the inanimate girl. Meanwhile the door of the adjoining room opened, and the foster child of Alisette—the little, three year old daughter of her sister, entered, and weeping, said in a stammering voice :

"Oh, I am so afraid !"

At the sight of this helpless being, human feeling returned to Jaromir's heart.

"No ! you shall not perish, dear creature," he said mildly ; "neither you nor this sinner !"

He took the child and wrapped her in one of Alisette's shawls. This latter had already been covered with a cloak by Regnard, but he was unable to lift her on account of his wound. Jaromir gave him the child, saying :

"Take you the little one !"

He then approached Alisette, raised her

with youthful strength, and made for the door. "Follow me," he said, "the garden is still within our reach."

Breathless and with burned hair they gained a safe retreat in the garden. They there set down their burdens and drew breath.

"We are in safety!" said Jaromir in the gloomy tone of indifference. "A gate leads through the garden-wall, in case that of the palace should be burning. As to what concerns us, Colonel, I think we shall meet again!"

Regnard replied not. He now suspected all, and felt that he could not ask further explanation from the unhappy youth. Jaromir quickly passed through the garden to rejoin his friends.

The faithful animal, although not fastened, still stood at the garden gate, as if expecting his master. Jaromir sprang into the saddle and rode at full speed through the streets.

On all sides buildings were tottering and falling. The night was brighter than day. Only where the smoke and thick rain of ashes filled the air was it dark. Lines of houses were burning in solitude—all had fled. Wherever the fire took, a struggle with the too powerful element was in vain. The flames crackled all around. It seemed to Jaromir as if the furies of hell had been unleashed to pursue him. The atmosphere, heated like a furnace, could scarcely be breathed. His eyeballs burned—the pain piercing through to his brain.

"And must I die here thus?" he cried in despair.

With exertion he opened his eyes and stared into the crackling sea of fire, to spy out an outlet somewhere. A gust of wind arose, powerfully assuaged the flames, and severing them into glowing walls, broke its way through. Jaromir rode into the open aperture; for a moment the flames parted to a great distance and gave him an insight to the place where safety was to be found, but already they closed again over his head. Suddenly, thunder rolled and rattled terribly, a roof fell in, burning beams and glowing stones crashed and tumbled; Jaromir's horse, struck by a large stone on the back, dropped beneath him. Benumbed he lay on the ground; but recovering the shock, proceeded on foot. Already he gave himself up for lost. With half-closed eyes, for he could not bear the full brightness, lie made towards the place where for a moment he had seen an open space. Suddenly, in this desert of flames an earnest, manly voice reached his ear.

"Can you point a way out of these burning streets?" he was asked.

Glad at having found at least one companion in death, he turned to the side whence

the sound proceeded; but suddenly, he stood petrified as he perceived the Emperor who, accompanied by few attendants only, emerged from a narrow, crooked alley. This man himself—he on whose decision the fate of all depends, is seen floundering amid a burning sea of fire, where safety is nowhere to be found. No, he cannot be lost!

This prophetic incident gave him new strength and composure. His own courage rose upon witnessing the calm resolution of that man who, with the same unchanged features, looked upon the desolation around him.

The guides of the great chief seemed confused by horror, for they vainly sought the old traces of the streets.

"Do you know of no outlet?" the Emperor asked.

"Yes, I think so," replied Jaromir firmly; "but the way leads through the flames yonder."

"Well, then, we have no time to lose," replied the Emperor, turning his steps in the direction Jaromir pointed out. Jaromir took the lead, proudly resolved to succeed or become the first victim. But, as if the elements even in their rage did not dare to oppose the conqueror, the wind dispersed the flames, and opened through them a way for him. Jaromir rushed on over burning embers and ashes. Their breath became fire, their eyes burned to the brain; lips and tongues became scorched and blistered; but suddenly, a fresh wind blew into their glowing faces, the open, free air was reached, and at the last extremity, the united cry burst forth—"Notre Empereur est sauvé!"

CHAPTER LVII.

SEPTEMBER had arrived, but the heavens were still cloudless and bright; the days glided away calmly in sunshine and mild weather. It is true that the foliage had begun to change color—even to fall; yet the fields were decked in luxuriant verdure and adorned with a variety of autumnal flowers. Consequently, the countess, Lodoiska, and Mary had a pleasant journey; what was wanting in the landscape was made up by the beautiful season; the happy quietude of which, uniting with the light touch of melancholy aroused by viewing nature in autumn, gave a zest to the sympathy of friendship, and harmonised well with the frame of mind of the two young ladies.

The palace of the countess, though its arrangements corresponded with a brilliant style of living, was, however, quite a homely abode, such as ladies who wish to pass the days in retirement, desire. They had moved to the lower part of the left wing, which opened upon the garden. The glass door of the saloon opened directly upon a slightly sloping grass-plot, surrounded by alder and jasmine bushes. Rose-bushes were planted in a semi-circle; their blossoms had withered long ago, but in their place, glittering in the middle of the terrace, was a rich medallion of late-blooming flowers, among which a bed of many-colored starwoods, carefully nursed by the gardener, were conspicuous. In that inner part of the wing which looked over the court-yard and garden lived Mary and Lodoiska. They loved each other as sisters, and would, under other circumstances, have been attached to each other, were it only on account of their mutual condition. Vines were trained up to the windows of their bedrooms, being close to the iron railings which crossed the lawn from one wing to the other, separating it from the gardens: but the fruit seldom ripened on this espalier, still they disguised the wall in a remarkable manner; and the sunbeams, without being entirely shut out, were agreeably modified by the green and tremulous shade. From their bedrooms they passed through a library to the boudoir, which adjoined the saloon, on the opposite side of which were the apartiments of the countess, running parallel with those of Lodoiska and Mary, and separated from them by a corridor. Even these possessed a view over the gardens, but limited by the wall, which here was only thirty paces distant, and the intervening space, planted with thick shrubbery, nicely concealing the wall which skirted the street where Françoise Alisette had been living, in a range projecting from the side of the main building. A row of tall poplars beyond the wall deprived the inhabitants of the street of any view into the garden, or through the windows of the palace. Thus all was quiet and secluded, and the dwelling caught from the dark thicket in which it was ensconced a shade of mournfulness which well corresponded with the secret feelings of its occupants.

In this manner, secluded even in the midst of a populous and busy city, the three ladies lived a peaceful life, spending their time in the pursuit of female occupations. Seldom was a visit received—more seldom returned. Their retirement became daily more agreeable to themselves, and they enjoyed it with greater pleasure the more they became acquainted with each other, and their mutual affection increased. The countess, who much exceeded the two maidens in years, surpassed

them also in the more solid advantages of mind. She was endowed with all the tenderness of the female character, yet under the control of judgment; and she was exempt from the weaknesses of feeling which more particularly belong to the inexperience of youth. Growing up during important changes of the times, she was at an early age drawn from the narrow sphere of ordinary female life into the more active and rapid career of the world. She had abandoned her home to live altogether for the sake of her fatherland. Her soul sympathised with the public destinies—she was an enthusiastic daughter of her nation. Upon Mary also the important events of the day had exercised an enlivening influence; even she burned for an oppressed fatherland, though in quite a different way. The countess took an active, spirited part in the public affairs, her heart already throbbed for them from habit, and she missed the loss of her quietude of mind no more. She eagerly perused the newspapers and political pamphlets of the day; she was familiar with the history of all the more important occurrences, followed them with acuteness, and anticipated the consequences on her country of events to come. Mary, on the contrary, loved, above everything, her country and the nation to which she belonged. She was German in language and principle; her noble hatred was directed merely against the enemies and oppressors of her own country;—other destinies of the world she looked upon not with indifference, indeed, but from a discreet distance, and with that limited sense of female regard which does not require direct participation in them; therefore she willingly returned to her homely and quiet sanctuary, and was patient since she could not act. With the deliverance of her fatherland her participation in public affairs would cease, or at least fall back into that retirement natural to the discreet female. By the contest she hoped merely to gain a quiet sanctuary of German simplicity. On the contrary, the wishes of the countess always extended beyond the threshold of home. Mary wished for her country's happiness, rest, and peace; it was the habitual tendency of thought in the countess to dwell on its splendor, glory, and power. On the exciting picture of a national war Mary beheld her countrymen only, and her nearest friends, as their representatives; the countess, on the contrary, kept her eyes on the heroes of her nation, and followed anxiously the fate of its chieftains. In the principal place of her picture Mary surely beheld on the battle-field, in the foreground her brother, Bernard, and, as she bashfully admitted, Rasinski. The countess was in the midst of the fight; her eyes followed the banners and their noble bearers—even in her

brother she beheld the generous leader foremost in peril, as became him, on the day of decision. Lodoiska, on the contrary, wholly kind and loving, heard the dull thunder of the battle from the distance only, but saw before her eyes the bleeding lover, sick or dying on the ground. Love filled so entirely her tender heart that there was no room for any other thought. Even the superstitious reverence with which she daily attended the celebration of mass was subordinate to the anguish of feeling, as her prayers arose chiefly for the friend of her soul. As is generally the case with noble minds, each of the ladies considered the other to be better and more accomplished than herself, only because she possessed what was wanting in themselves. Thus Lodoiska regarded her protectress with the most profound respect, and humbly submitted to Mary because she was astonished at the power of both in compelling her to love them. The countess and Mary revered the sacred flame in Lodoiska's breast, which separated every unworthy particle from the purity which filled the heart of the girl.

Upon the table of the Countess was spread a map of Russia. Guided by the newspaper reports, she could minutely follow every march, every movement of the army, tracing the line with pins, the heads of which she had furnished with ingenious signs, to enable her with a rapid glance to discern, not only enemy and friend, but also the position of each separate corps. For Rasinski's regiment had Lodoiska taken a golden pin from her hair; its bright head showed her every day where her heart should seek her destined husband.

"Even we," said Mary, "here at a distance—when the battle is over we receive intelligence that our dearest are still unharmed among the living—even we read the reports of it with anxiously beating hearts. How would it be, if destruction were so near us as the inhabitants of Smolensko? If, like them, we knew our fathers, brothers and husbands were before the gates, engaged in a struggle for life, for liberty, country—for our lives and for our honor?"

"My excited feelings would carry me to the walls," cried the Countess, as usual when animated, pacing the apartment with rapid steps. "I would watch the progress of the battle with my own eyes!"

"I should not be able to do that," replied Mary, with a mild countenance. "Still I believe," she continued, in the uncertain tone of modesty, "that I should possess firmness enough to nurse the wounded!"

"Alas! and I!" exclaimed Lodoiska, sighing, "I should certainly be capable of nothing save praying in the sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin for the departed!"

On a close September morning, Lodoiska, in conformity with her daily practice, accompanied by a female servant, repaired to the nearest church. Her path carried her past the hotel of the French Minister at Warsaw, Herr Von Pradt. Before the door stood a courier's vehicle, and she observed a remarkable commotion among the servants. Some intelligence of importance must have arrived. She approached with trembling heart. Too bashful herself, she directed her servant to make the necessary inquiries and rejoin her as she slowly repassed the hotel. As, however, she came past the door, an officer in uniform came out; he started on perceiving her, and appeared to know her. Rapidly advancing, he bowed, and addressed her:

"I hope perhaps too much from the accuracy of your memory, if I presumed that you still remember me, gracious Countess?"

Lodoiska started with maiden bashfulness; yet she instantly recognised Captain Arnheim, from Toplitz.

"I do, indeed, sir, remember you," was her answer; "though I remained but a few days at Toplitz—and indeed it is but a short time since we left that place. What brings you to Warsaw, Captain?"

"I am perfectly restored to health now, and on my way to the army in Volhynia."

"It seems as if even just now important information has arrived for the French Minister," said Lodoiska, turning round to see whether her servant was approaching.

"Of the most important character," answered the Captain; "the courier has brought the news this very moment. A great battle has been fought within two days' march of Moscow."

"Much blood is then shed?" faltered Lodoiska, trembling, and growing pale.

As they walked along, Arnheim observed not how violently she was agitated by his words, and continued:

"Blood, without an example in the history of war! The number of the dead and wounded is not exactly known yet—but according to the report, estimated from sixty to seventy thousand, on both sides! The victory of the Emperor is purchased by immense sacrifice!"

Suddenly the picture of the battle stood before Lodoiska in all its dreadful colors, and filled her mind with such horror that she was overcome with her emotions;—a deadly pallor overspread her countenance;—she stepped backward a pace or two, and exclaiming in a faint voice: "Holy virgin!" sank to the earth.

Arnheim immediately raised her in his arms. In his embarrassment he looked around for aid, when Lodoiska's servant speedily approached, crying in a lamentable tone:

"For heaven's sake, what is the matter with the lady?"

"The news of a battle has alarmed her; let us carry her into the Minister's hotel!" said Arnheim.

Lodoiska, however, opened her eyes again. A dark glow of shame passed over the marble of her cheeks; and she sighed heavily. She was not able to speak; yet she raised herself, and leaned upon the arm of the servant.

"How can I obtain forgiveness for my imprudence?" said Arnheim. "We soldiers are rude to that degree, that on the intelligence of a battle we never think of the victims."

"You are not to blame," answered Lodoiska, "it was only my foolishness." Then her tears burst forth. "I must go home; excuse me, only," she added, with difficulty.

"Dare I offer you my arm, or shall I call for a coach?" asked the Captain.

"I shall feel obliged to you, if you would please to support me, as I am rather feeble."

Arnheim gave her his arm, while on the other side Lodoiska leant upon her servant; and thus they proceeded to the palace of the Countess.

Happily Lodoiska's swoon was but for a moment. The attention of the crowd in the street was so earnestly directed towards the Minister's hotel, that the occurrence passed off unobserved. Turning into a lane, the party reached the palace unmolested by the curiosity of troublesome spectators.

The Captain had no difficulty in explaining to himself the cause of the sudden terror of Lodoiska; for who had not a friend, a brother, a father in the army? Meanwhile, he was too discreet to make any further enquiries, and endeavored to modify the frightful impression of his first information by every consolatory suggestion.

Having arrived at the gate of the house, Lodoiska said:

"I thank you, from my heart, for your kindness. I would certainly ask you to accompany me farther; yet—"

Arnheim interrupted her, and replied with animation:

"Seclusion is necessary in the first moments of agitation; still I trust you will not deny me the happiness of seeing you on a more favorable occasion."

Lodoiska looked gratefully at him, as she replied.

"I should be very sorry if we should not see you again; we shall, I hope, be able to bid you welcome under less painful circumstances."

So saying, she gave him her hand, and turning quickly, entered the house. With difficulty she reached the quiet garden-

room, where Mary was the first friend she met.

"Lend me your strength, Mary!" cried she, opening her arms to her friend. "Lend me your strength, dearest, that I may endure this agony until further information!"

"Gracious heavens! what has occurred?" exclaimed Mary, frightened, while gently embracing the girl, and conducting her to a couch. After a few minutes, and in the greatest agitation, Lodoiska said:

"A battle has been fought; seventy thousand dead and wounded cover the field. The dreadful thought of this terrible scene will drive me to madness. Alas! Mary, I see nothing but blood, and the pale features of the dead!"

The Countess entered; by the servant she had already been informed of what had occurred. Her feelings on the victory were less excited than the anguish of her friends. Kindly and calmly she approached the terrified Lodoiska, saying:

"Come to my heart, dearest daughter; shed your tears upon the breast of your friend; you will then be calm, and can await with composure farther tidings which must soon reach us."

This example of firmness and gentle sympathy sensibly awakened the courage of the desponding girl.

After a few minutes a servant entered, announcing that Captain Arnheim anxiously desired admittance, as he brought good tidings.

Agreeably surprised, though somewhat embarrassed, Mary learned now, for the first time, the presence of this acquaintance from home, whose great attention to her could not have escaped her notice. Lodoiska, occupied only with the battle, which caused her so much sorrow, had not thought of him at all; and through the servant the Countess only knew that a strange officer had supported and conducted Lodoiska home.

"Bid him welcome!" said the Countess, addressing the servant.

With trembling hearts all listened to his quick steps in the saloon.

"Excuse my sudden entrance," he said to the Countess; "but I could not possibly deny myself the pleasure of being the bearer of this note, which no doubt will remove your apprehensions with respect to the battle." He then handed her an unsealed paper, on which were marked with lead-pencil a few words in the Polish language.

"A thousand, thousand thanks!" said the Countess, after having rapidly perused the paper. "Here, Lodoiska, read yourself what my brother writes:

"DEAR SISTER—The battle is over;—

I am alive ;—our nearest friends are unhurt.
More in my next."

Lodoiska turned her looks to heaven, and folded her hands over her breast, unable to utter a word. Even Mary was deeply agitated.

"All escaped!" said she, and a tear of the sincerest emotion trembled in her eyes. "That is more than I dared hope myself. Receive my gratitude for your message!"

As great happiness or misfortune unbosoms noble hearts, that they no more observe the conventional barriers of life, thus Mary, unfettered by restraint, stepped forward to Arnheim, and kindly gave him her hand. He was abashed in the extreme, because of Mary's presence here, which he did not expect, and of which he had not been aware before. With agreeable surprise he seized the offered hand, and pressed it to his lips.

"You here, Mademoiselle!" he exclaimed, gazing perplexedly.

"I have availed myself of a most friendly invitation," answered Mary; "yet to meet with a countryman, and especially one with whom we are intimately acquainted, in a foreign place, is truly a happy occurrence."

"Yes—certainly, certainly!" exclaimed the Captain, pressing her hand with such earnestness as to cause Mary gently to withdraw it.

"We owe you our grateful acknowledgments, Captain Arnheim," said the Countess. "But how did you get the paper?"

"In the simplest manner possible," answered the Captain. "I had just announced myself at the bureau of the legation as the courier arrived. An officer who is employed there, told me that, as usual, the courier brought a number of loose letters and memoranda, partly on small pieces of paper unsealed—partly on prepared covers, and partly written with pencil, by which those who had taken part in the battle dispatched the earliest information to their respective friends. This caused me to think that there might be some news for you, gracious Countess. I hastened back to the bureau, and actually found this open note written with pencil. I applied for it, to deliver to you forthwith, which was obligingly consented to, as the legation is anxious to see these letters immediately dispatched."

"Do you believe, sir," asked the Countess, "that this victory will decide the war?"

"Beyond all doubt, madame. Two short days' march from the ancient capital of the country, it will throw that city into the hands of the Emperor, and by this the fate of Russia may be decided."

"But the empire extends far beyond Moscow; the most flourishing and populous provinces are situated at the foot of the

southern portion of the Ural. I would not consider Russia entirely conquered, even if both its capitals were in the hands of the Emperor."

"Certainly not," replied Arnheim, "but its moral strength is broken by the taking of its ancient capital. The continuation of the war is undoubtedly possible by physical force, but the moral power being destroyed, the result is precarious. Too many important and conflicting interests are attached to the capital of a country. It is the central point of wealth, commerce and trade; and as a violent blow need only crush one of the nobler organs to destroy the whole body, the invasion of an enemy and the capture of a capital, exercise a fatal influence on every resource of a country."

"Thus Napoleon's conquest over the civilised world is then decided!" said Mary, bitterly.

"Of the European continent at least. The result of this battle may be hailed as a victory by all Europe. Against whom, it may be asked, is the war carried on? In my opinion, not against Russia, but against England. By the defeat of the Russian army, the Emperor is now at last master of the European coasts—for of Spain and Portugal he will soon be in possession. Then he can dictate his own conditions to England. The power of England is great in itself, and still greater by its alliances on the continent, and therefore, the continental powers must first, as they now really are, be conquered, ere that little island could be humiliated. This aim seems now within the Emperor's grasp. Look, therefore, for a general peace, so necessary to the belligerent nations—above all, to conquering France. Many evils will cease, which, by the force of circumstances, the Emperor has been compelled to inflict on the European people. Austria will be the representative of Germany. Napoleon will with pleasure see that country in a condition peaceful towards himself, and in every way possible he will aid in promoting its prosperity. Many old and evil habits, in Germany had to be rooted out before a new edifice found safe ground and a free space. The Emperor of France, as the representative of a powerful and newly awakened era, has abolished the old forms. Those existing at present are merely transient. He knows himself, that there exists nothing solid—for he daily demolishes what he had built for the necessity of the moment, and allows nations and leaders alike suddenly to change and alter their duties. When once, however, he shall have reached the aim of his vast designs—when once the continent shall be as firmly united in its inner parts as the vast provinces of which it consists are externally

circumscribed—then the great man will lay a solid, lasting foundation on which to erect a splendid edifice for the future. For that purpose this last battle was necessary. No one feels more deeply than myself the hard sacrifices that Germany has had to make; but now they will be put an end to—they were a punishment for old and heavy offences; history shows no nation exempt from a similar atonement for old public sins."

Arnheim uttered these thoughts with much animation; he spoke for all parties, and therefore even those of a different opinion listened to him with pleasure. His words had comforted Mary in the very depths of her heart, and her looks brightened into a gentle smile as she tendered him her sincere thanks.

The Countess rose in great emotion.

"When even you," she said, "entertain so many hopes as a consequence of this great campaign, how must *our* hearts beat who have fought in this battle for the liberty of our fatherland? Would that the day were come—the long-expected day, when Poland, at present bowed down into the dust, could again proudly raise her noble head. Would that the White Eagle could spread its lone pinions, and be capable of once more hazarding the daring flight to the sun of liberty! Oh, may this victory be thrice-blessed! The blood of the fallen will not then have been spilled in vain!"

Suddenly, the ringing of the bells of the cathedral sounded through the trees, which rustled in the fresh wind.

"At this unusual time?—What may that signify?" asked the Countess.

The ringing of the bells increased—from near and distant steeples the merry chimes interrupted the quietude of the forenoon.

"The celebration of the victory!" observed the Captain.

"And a victory it is, for which we must thank heaven!" added the Countess. "How proud I feel at these sounds. From the dark thunder-cloud of battle a new morning is perhaps dawning for our country. Now can I explain the restlessness of my heart; I must join the congregation of the praying, grateful people, and uplift my ardent soul towards heaven in prayer!"

She called for a shawl and flung it over her shoulders. Arnheim offered her his arm. Mary and Lodoiska followed.

In the streets all was motion and life. The people thronged across the squares towards the churches where the bells were ringing, as on the holiday of a saint. Beneath the hotel of the minister waved the tri-colored banner. The troops present in the city assembled to march to church in parade. As if by a magic power the working-day was changed into a great festival. The people were at-

tired in their festive garments; men, women, children—all rushed in variegated groups to the sacred edifices.

How brightly sparkled the lively dark eyes of the maidens and youths! From beneath the veils of the former their raven black hair fell beautifully down and covered their white necks; the latter had proudly pressed upon their forehead the high cap trimmed with gold, from which rich tassels escaped, and girded themselves with man's truest ornament—the sword.

Mary felt almost alarmed when she beheld this general enthusiasm. Alas!—in her own country she had never witnessed anything similar. And would they *there* rejoice over this victory? Were not their hearts with the enemy, though forced by their destiny to combat against him? And would this battle have really such happy consequences as their hopes led them to believe?

Engaged in such reflections the party approached the church, the wide gates of which were open. The solemn tones of the organ saluted the ear of the advancing worshippers, while the louder and loftier peals of bells summoned them from afar. The holy flame burned in the chandeliers at the high altar, and before all the images of the saints. Already were the spacious halls crowded almost to overflowing, and yet renewed crowds pressed in. It was with great difficulty that the Countess reached her private oratory, from within the grates of which she could cast a glance over the whole. Opposite, in the choir, were the seats of the French embassy—to the left the high altar—to the right the pulpit. The lattice of the pew was a great convenience to Mary, who, as she attended divine service without joining in its ceremonies, necessarily appeared only as a spectator, although her heart throbbed so gratefully for the preservation of her nearest friends, that her prayers for a happy turn in the destiny of her country fervently passed her lips.

While the Countess and Lodoiska kneeled with rosaries in their hands, Mary remained on her retired seat. Arnheim had not entered the pew of the Countess—custom separating men and women in the church.

Lodoiska prayed with the fervor of an enthusiast, her eyes constantly resting upon the image of the virgin suspended opposite her. She moved her lips, but no sound was audible. In her eyes shone the purest thankfulness—the holy melancholy of gratitude. The Countess was serious; even when kneeling, she maintained the majesty of her carriage, and sublimity was displayed on her open forehead. Occasionally she raised her large dark eye in holy earnest appeal to the Power above.

Mass having been brought to a close, the

ladies left the church. Close by the gate the crowds crossed each other in such a way as to cause a temporary check to their progress. From both sides those who had been sitting in the choir came down the stairs; from three sides those from the nave of the church pressed on. Arnheim had not been able to rejoin the ladies; they were alone, keeping close together.

Now, the French minister with his splendid retinue also descended the stairs. The stream of people brought them into the immediate vicinity of the ladies. By degrees Mary observed herself entirely surrounded by uniforms, and she was obliged to lower her head to avoid the often equivocal looks of these men; then she heard a few French words spoken in a voice known to her. She turned her eye in the direction, but, as though she had trodden on a serpent, she shrank back and grew pale. She saw before her the feared, detested Beaucaire, and at a distance of two paces from him St. Luces also.

Mary had to summon all her composure not to betray herself by a scream; her knees trembled and she could hardly make a step forward. Surely she would have sunk to the ground, had not the throng forcibly kept her upright. Her feelings resembled those of a wanderer, who suddenly discovers that having sat down to rest close to a sleeping viper, fleeing or remaining will bring destruction upon him.

The position of Beaucaire and St. Luces at this moment made it impossible for them to see Mary; yet she could not know whether she had not long ago been observed by both. Oh, what would she have given if, like Lodoiska and the Countess, she had worn a veil to conceal her face! She bent her head down and covered it with her handkerchief, thus endeavoring to hide it as much as possible—but the pressure of the crowd gradually forced her towards the danger, and she felt that the moment was not distant when she should touch the person of her unprincipled persecutor. She would have given a hint to the Countess, but every word was perilous, and might have betrayed her. Submitting to her fate she awaited silently, but in agony, what should come—when suddenly the multitude turned sideways, another gate having been opened. The Countess followed, and in a few minutes they reached a free passage, and hastened home, Mary communicating her imminent danger by the way.

The next morning they learned that Captain Von Arnheim, with two French officers of the Commissariat Department, answering to appearance of St. Luces and Beaucaire—had the preceding day been suddenly dispatched on to Wilna.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE following days passed quiet as usual. The great battle was everywhere the constant topic of conversation. By-and-by fresh particulars were received. The storming of the large redoubt was but briefly dwelt on; none, however, had omitted to write something about the great losses, the obstinacy of the battle, the terrible fire of the artillery, and the superhuman exertions and hardships of the army.

On the fifth day a second letter arrived from Rasinski, in which lay small notes scribbled with pencil, from Louis and Jaromir. Rasinski wrote :—

" DEAR SISTER—For four days we have been in ceaseless pursuit of the enemy, and have daily skirmishes. We push our way, however, only slowly, as the Russians retire in good order. It would not have been so if our exhaustion had not made it impossible to pursue them faster. The care of our wounded, and of providing for our pressing wants, claims almost every moment of our time. Thus I can only write these few lines at present. We have lost many dear friends. Two-thirds of my regiment fell on the hills of Semenowski, and among them, my old faithful Petrowski, whose dead body I could not even search for and bury. For centuries past no such battle has been fought. Our exertions cannot be described; but still, by the blessing of heaven, we are in good spirits and bodily vigor. Over the bloody battlefield of Borodino the sun of Poland's liberty will rise! Therefore, Johanna, mourn not those who are dead. Their country will erect monuments to them, that their glory may shine for ever. Farewell, Johanna!—The morning dawns at last. Be happy!"

" THY BROTHER."

Louis' note was as follows :—

" MARY—I require days to express the feelings of my heart, and I can hardly spare minutes. On the evening before the battle I was informed of the death of our mother. Oh! how thy letter comforted me! In the midst of the conflict my heart was with thee alone, poor sister, and the threatening dangers almost lost their power over me. Bernard is the most faithful friend in the world; he supposed me fallen, and made search for me among the dead. Yet we met again alive. Farewell! Despair not! The day of reunion and happiness will dawn for us also. That the terrible battle spared me may be to thee a confirmation of that!"

Jaromir only wrote :—

" LODOISKA—Dearest of my life! tremble

no more ; all dangers are past. The battle was fierce. Even I have to mourn many brothers and comrades—myself protected by thy prayers ! Thee I thank for all—happiness and life ! Oh, could I only first sink down to rest upon thy heart ! Boleslaus, Louis, and Bernard are safe. Farewell, dearest ! and think of thine ever faithful

" JAROMIR."

This first information, under the hands of their relatives, made the ladies happy beyond description. Every particle of doubt was dispersed ; they gave themselves up entirely to their blissful feeling.

Thus a week passed.

Then the information was received that the grand army had entered Moscow. From the palace of the Czars the bulletin was signed by which the Emperor made known this event to astonished Europe. The great aim—the anxiously-desired peace—was attained ; for, with whom should war be made, when there were no longer enemies to subdue ? Now, hopes were revived in all hearts ; now, at last, one fancied the day of rest—the remuneration for such immense sacrifices—to have arrived. The Pole felt himself once more free. He hoped again to have a fatherland—a king sprung from the bosom of the people—a history ! In those feelings the country was happy and proud.

In her warm breast Mary nursed the buds which Arnheim's views had planted there.

Five days more, and the rumor was circulated first by the Jews who came from Brzeze Litewski that Moscow had been set on fire by the Russians. As usual, some exaggerated, while others pretended to know with certainty that the whole mighty affair was but the destruction of a few buildings which had accidentally taken fire. At the French minister's hotel the strictest silence was maintained ; to no one was communicated the contents of the despatches brought by the couriers ; yet, louder and ever increasing, the painful rumors were spread abroad, and soon no one dared to contradict them. Finally the mischief could be concealed no longer. It was publicly admitted in the official notes of the French minister that, in their furious despair, the Russians had devoted their capital to destruction. Whatever was said, was said with the design to mitigate the dread occasioned by the information, and to prevent the supposition that this occurrence could be hurtful to the French army, or in any way menace its prospects. The deed seemed, at all events, too monstrous—too unexampled—if its consequences could not be clearly defined. Only under the certainty of saving Russia, could Moscow have been sacrificed to the flames, as one would cast burning torches into the

houses of Paris only if the safety of France was at stake. Such was the firm belief of every one. A mute, cold terror prevailed—a shudder shook the hearts of the most daring. The times had accustomed them to colossal events—to deeds unheard of ; this last, however, exceeded by far the limits of all imagination.

Thus the deepest consternation and dejection succeeded the short intoxication created by the victory.

The Countess resembled a marble statue, so pale had she grown after this frightful intelligence had reached her. She trembled—not for the fate of her brother or her friends—she trembled for the fate of her country.

In the burning of Moscow she fancied she beheld a terrible picture of the future destiny of Warsaw, and in her overwhelming grief she prophetically exclaimed—

" Who knows how near the day is at hand when the flames will close over the pinnacles of the city of my fathers, as an atonement for the terrible burnt-offering with which Russia has purchased its liberty ? "

Lodoiska lost all her presence of mind. Mary alone maintained in her deportment that calmness which is the sweetest fruit of faith and knowledge. She alone was not precipitated into the abyss of despair. In her self-possession the Countess needed no consolation ; shocked, but firm, she stood without fear by the opened gates of despair. Lodoiska, however, was shaken by the storm like a pliant vine ; she needed a support, and the sweet solace offered by Mary, whose love for her taught her the best method of keeping hope alive, was at hand to support her. Lodoiska in secret fear shrunk back from the resolute bearing of the Countess, in whose serious look and features, expressive of lofty sorrow, she fancied she read a concealed reproach.

Rapidly, however, did the state of affairs change. In these times every frail vessel of life was reeled on a stormy ocean ; now, from the top of the waves one beheld the haven—safety and victory ; now the waves towered high, hardly permitting a glimpse of heaven to be caught. Later news from Moscow brought the information that the army was not dangerously situated ; that, in spite of the dreadful conflagration, there were buildings enough left for winter-quarters ; and that, although the war still continued, preliminary negotiations for peace were already entered into.

The consternation created by the earlier reports of the evil vanished, and fresh hopes arose. The ladies only awaited news from their friends to enjoy the general happiness prevailing.

One evening they received two letters ; one of them, written by Jaromir, was directed to Lodoiska, the other from Rasinski to his sister. This was looked on as strange, as all notes generally were enclosed in Rasinski's letters. Lodoiska was at vespers ; thus the Countess broke the seal of Rasinski's letter only ; it was dated the 15th of September, the day after the breaking out of the fire. He wrote :—

" DEAREST SISTER—As for us, we have escaped a great evil in the most wonderful manner. The half of Moscow is enveloped in flames. An unexampled confusion prevails. Having been obliged to leave the city, we are now encamped in the fields. I avail myself of the present moment—the first I can spare, to inform you that we are all alive and unhurt. I know not when this letter can be forwarded. Colonel Regnard, to whom I spoke but just now, will deliver it to the field mail.

" THY BROTHER."

In the letter was a separate piece of paper, with the superscription :—" For thee alone ! " Its contents ran :—

" We missed Jaromir ! Keep it a secret from Lodoiska. That he has perished I can hardly imagine. I dispatched him with a message to Marshal Mortier ; he has not returned, but in this extensive city, and with the great confusion now prevailing, nothing is easier than to go astray. To-morrow we shall meet again, I hope. To thee alone I communicate this, as I have solemnly promised never to conceal anything from thee. Therefore, believe me also, when I say that I feel no apprehensions about the safety of Jaromir."

The Countess having perused these lines, thought it quite natural that the letter from Jaromir, arriving at the same time with the one for her brother, would give some explanation of his non-appearance. Not without probability she judged it to have been written later for the purpose of entirely tranquillising Lodoiska. She rejoiced at the prospect of the girl's agreeable surprise on her return from vespers.

In a short half-hour Lodoiska made her appearance. The Countess went to meet her, holding the letter jestingly over her head, and saying :

" What will you give me for this letter, Lodoiska ? "

" From Jaromir !" she cried, her eyes sparkling with joy. A warm kiss was the reward the over-happy girl paid for the treasure. Her cheeks colored with joyful anticipation—she unfolded the letter and held it up to the light ; the next moment she started

aside and grew pale as death—her hand sunk powerless, and the letter fell to the ground. Before the Countess or Mary could render her assistance, she fell senseless to the floor.

" In heaven's name, what is it ? " cried the Countess, endeavoring, aided by Mary, to raise the prostrate girl. They succeeded in placing her upon the sofa. The Countess rang the bell, and Mary, taking the letter up from the floor, saw at a glance that it contained but one line. She dared not read it, but the Countess took it without hesitation, and read the following words :

" Hypocrite ! Traitor ! We are separated forever. " JAROMIR."

Both ladies stood speechless and paralyzed.

" A blow sufficient, indeed, to crush the poor girl ! " said the Countess at length, in a tone of the deepest indignation. " It is mean as it is detestable—an insult without example ! "

In violent agitation she walked the apartment to and fro ; to satisfy herself, Mary read the unfortunate paper over again, and as if chilled by its import, put it away from her.

" Unhappy girl ! " she said, bending over Lodoiska ; " how shall we be able to soften thy grief ! "

Lodoiska's servant entered ; she was frightened at the sight of her mistress.

" Lodoiska is suddenly taken ill," said the Countess ; " tell Casimir to run for a physician. Who could have thought that suspicion could rest upon this pure soul ! This heart, which was consumed by the fire of its love, is accused of faithlessness ! Abominable ! detestable ! and what proofs can that frivolous wretch, who, with rough heels, tramples to the ground the flowers of his own priceless happiness—what proofs has he for this scandalous impeachment ?—An idle word—a calumniating breath—or a mischievous story from some malicious knave among his comrades ! "

The servant entered again, and Lodoiska was deposited on her couch in her own room. Mary sat down by her side, awaiting returning consciousness. In solemn, deep grief the Countess stood silent at the foot of her bed, with her eyes constantly fixed upon the inanimate girl.

At last Lodoiska opened her eyes, and painfully looking up, she gave her protectress her hand as she murmured from the very depth of her soul, " Oh, how miserable I am ! "

CHAPTER LIX.

It was night. The rising storm swept over the plain and whistled sadly through the dark pine woods as Rasinski reached his place of bivouac. He was attended by a diminished body of faithful soldiers, which he dared no longer call a regiment. They were weary and hungry, their limbs benumbed with cold and rain.

"We will encamp here," said Rasinski,— "at the foot of these hills. We have at least protection against the storm."

Rasinski had chosen for his place of encampment a projecting point of an old pine forest. Tall trees grew on the precipitous but not lofty hills, which encompassed an almost circular valley. The limbs of these ancient trees interlaced each other. The forest, therefore, was dense enough, and a dark growth of brush-wood ran up the sides of the hills.

The place, it is true, afforded some shelter against the autumnal wind; yet it was gloomy and cold, since even in summer, the sun scarcely penetrated the thick mass of vegetation, and still less in the latter part of the autumn. A few birches only, with their white trunks and pale-yellow leaves, stood like ghosts in the dark back-ground.

"A good ambush," said Bernard, entering the narrow inlet.

"Very convenient for a gang of robbers," replied Rasinski.

"If we were all assembled," continued Bernard, "our resting-place might be too small; still, there is ample room for a hundred."

Rasinski directed his men to dismount and make every preparation for picketing and feeding their horses under as good shelter as could be obtained. A party was detailed for foraging—another for cutting wood, and another for carrying water. The remainder were ordered to undertake the stable duty.

Having thus given his orders, Rasinski seated himself, low-spirited and weary, on the trunk of a fallen tree thickly covered with moss. His hands rested upon the hilt of his sword, and his countenance bespoke gloomy thoughts.

"Where shall I let them make our fire, Colonel?" enquired Bernard.

"Wherever you please! Beneath the large pine yonder!" replied his chief.

Rasinski remained sitting motionless and lost in deep thought, while Bernard with a couple of men made preparations for a place where their commander might sleep. Heavy, mournful forebodings agitated the mind of the brave soldier. He looked as frowningly as the night and forest around him. Soon, however, his very disquietude aroused him.

Walking to and fro, he now and then gave a short but precise order, for, although restlessness prevailed in his heart, his attentive eye observed everything.

"Do you not feel inclined to lie down by the fire, sir?" said Bernard, once more approaching him. "Look, it is already crackling, and lights up these old trees with their gigantic arms."

"I wonder whether Boleslaus and Louis will be back to-night? I am anxiously waiting for news from Jaromir!" said Rasinski, as if he had not heard Bernard's words.

"Endeavor to forget that, sir," said Bernard, entreatingly. "It is a feverish dream—nothing else. Such an infernal night as that which Jaromir first passed in Moscow was enough to call up the wildest fancies of an excited imagination; and then his lying in the hospital, without friends, and amidst the lamentations of the maimed and dying! Mind my words: as soon as he is restored to health and his senses invigorated, his melancholy dream will utterly vanish!"

"I have not forwarded the letter," observed Rasinski after a pause. "I would not do it."

"And you acted right. You acted in accordance with your true faith and sound discretion—for what reason could then be assigned for the erroneous opinion?"

"For the fact itself," replied Rasinski, "the proof was certainly wanting; yet, to arouse apprehensions in my heart, half of the evidence would have been sufficient. Indeed, I believe that Jaromir has secretly offended Lodoiska, and that it is not a feverish dream only that reminds him of it. But now I remember what he said to Louis the evening previous to the conflagration. He was not sick; no wound tormented him; no great exertions had exhausted his physical strength; the scenes of that terrible night had not as yet made any dreadful impression upon his mind, and still—"

"As far as I can interpret what Louis told me on the subject," interrupted Bernard, "even then Jaromir doubted Lodoiska's affection for him. This, however, might have been mere suspicion, created at the moment, in his young and ardent breast. The next minute he felt ashamed of his words, and excused himself. Such was his state of mind on the night the fire commenced, and having probably mingled the terrors of the scene with his own agitated thoughts, he formed from the whole a fearful combination of evil. It was then that he wrote the letter to her, which makes you so uneasy. When Louis and Boleslaus return, we shall, I trust, be more particularly informed; Jaromir, no doubt, has told them all."

"I feel cold. Let us lie down by the fire,

I am very weary. A terrible war is this!—The whole day on horseback, looking at the enemy, and no engagement!—a great enemy, indeed, if a Cossack waits for a pistol-shot. Ah! were our horses only as serviceable as they were when we crossed the bridge of the Vistula, this trifling would soon be put an end to! It is said that the negotiations for peace have proved abortive. Kutusow, I believe, knew that long ago. They are not deferred without good reason. The winter must annihilate us here. I am with the greatest anxiety looking for Boleslaus' return from Moscow. I hope he has succeeded in procuring a part, at least, of what we are so seriously in need."

"If Louis brought me a pair of fresh horses only," jested Bernard, "he certainly would make my legs a trifle more comfortable, and I am in no small want of a new furred coat to replace this worn and half-burnt cloak."

"Spare your jesting, Bernard," said Rasinski, earnestly; "you have not yet experienced how sharp the tooth of misery can bite. I have too often seen how those better equipped and provided for than we, have been obliged to defend themselves against its keen edge. Already, although we have sufficiency of fuel, the night-frost throws too many of our men on the sick list. How will it be when the winter sets in, when——"

"Well, I think we should repair to Moscow; fifteen versts we are able to march, I suppose?"

"Do you?"

A sentry challenged at this moment, and the reply was heard indicating an arrival from Moscow.

"That is Boleslaus!" exclaimed Rasinski, hastily rising.

In a moment Boleslaus jumped from his horse and saluted his friends.

"Where is Louis? What news do you bring from Jaromir?" asked Bernard and Rasinski, together.

"The service, in the first place," replied Boleslaus. "I have been successful. Great as was the want and the number of applicants, I have yet been able to procure some necessaries. Your liberality, Colonel, enabled me to pay the highest prices!"

"Speak not of that," interrupted the latter.

"I made a bargain with the Jews. They brought me eighty pair of boot-soles, and thirty pair of new boots; I could find only sixty cloaks; most of them are old, though still fit for use, and part of them thickly lined. I also bought three sheep-skin coats, which for years perhaps have covered the bodies of Russian peasants, and yet are not to be despised. The winter will come, and we Poles are at least partly acquainted with it. It appears as if the French would not believe

that the pleasant fall-weather could cease. I told them they would bivouac there only three nights."

"Where are the things you bring?"

"Louis is convoying the transport with some men. They are coming on a wagon, for which I made application. I rode ahead of them. I trust they may find us safe in this lurking-hole."

"The storm drove us hither," observed Rasinski. "We will despatch some men to meet the transport. Bernard, detail a few men to the main road and desire them to halt there." Bernard hereupon left.

"Well," continued Rasinski to Boleslaus, "what you have brought for us we were in great want of. Is all the money gone?"

"Not all; I could not make so free with your property. I have yet forty ducats left."

"On such an occasion you should not have been sparing. I wish you had purchased some worsted stockings."

"If there had been any, I would have spent the last penny for them. Indeed, the other things are actually not so necessary yet.—Still, you must have something reserved for yourself. It will be difficult to raise money again!"

"The money invested for the benefit of my comrades yields the noblest interest. I know they will not forsake me in need, and the cloak I purchase for the soldier to-day, covers me to-morrow, if the night is cold and the faithful comrade sees that his commander is in want of it. Think you that a weighty purse would keep me warm?"

"Your generosity prompts your profusion, sir," replied Boleslaus; "yet it would be opposed to my honor and my conscience to take such advantage of your kindness. We should also bear a small share in what is done for the men. I am therefore emboldened to refund to you what we consider it our duty to supply."

Rasinski was about to remonstrate, when he was interrupted by the entrance of Bernard, who said to Boleslaus:

"Now tell us something about Jaromir."

"By-and-bye; first, matters of importance; the negotiations for peace are broken off."

"I thought so!" replied Rasinski, with a sigh.

"Kutusow has suddenly attacked the King of Naples and repulsed him. The Emperor received the intelligence at the Kremlin, while reviewing the troops under the command of Marshal Ney. He instantly exclaimed, "Is it war?—well; be it so!" Orders were despatched in all directions, and to-morrow evening the army will move on Kalouga. We, and all those regiments who have had their stations north-easterly, march for Mo-

cow to-morrow, to join the Grand Army.—Here is the route."

"Thus the war will be renewed," said Rasinski.

"I presume so. We are now to force our way to the southerly provinces, where we may hope to obtain a firm footing before the winter sets in—or at least reach Kiew, and be quartered there during the cold season."

"It was time, indeed! God be praised that this decision is at last adopted. If the war is carried in that direction, I shall still entertain hopes. In those regions the winter commences half a month later at least, and is considerably milder. The country is rich, and can support us better by far than the desert we have traversed. This news is, indeed, worth something. Now about Jaromir. Is he restored to health?"

Boleslaus hesitated for a moment.

"Yes—if we may call it restoration. His injuries from the fire are healing—the violent fever has ceased—he even feels himself strong enough to march. He will not remain in the rear, and I should think he has recovered sufficient of bodily strength, but—"

"Well?"

"His mind is depressed, the brightness of his eye dimmed, his clear brain now clouded. He is no more our healthy, cheerful Jaromir. I am afraid he—" Boleslaus paused.

After a few moments, however, he continued: "The Emperor has sent him the cross of the Legion of Honor. He refused it, with the words, 'Accident only directed me; I must not accept of this mark of distinction. May the Emperor honor me with it when I have deserved it!' No remonstrances had any influence upon him; he remained firm. You remember well how ardently for years he desired to obtain this distinction?"

"I do, I do!" replied Rasinski, "there is a gloom in his mind that cannot be lit up by all the flames of burning Moscow. Did he say anything about his letter to you?"

"Not a word."

"He must, however, have written it full one day before your arrival."

"What were the contents?" inquired Boleslaus.

"Hear it."

Rasinski took the folded letter from his pocket, and read as follows:—

"RASINSKI—You have been a second father to me,—to-day I give you that dear name for the last time; from this moment you are my commander only—and that you may still be—since I have not yet lost the honor of a soldier. The last favor of your former friendship I solicit from you. Forward the enclosed letter to Lodoiska. Three times I have written to her, a repentant, praying for forgiveness. I did so during the troubled dreams

of my delirium; I destroyed the letters, however, and sent none of them. I am restored to health—I am conscious of what I do, and I act as I am compelled to act.

"JAROMIR."

"What has he written to Lodoiska? Nay, conceal it not from me," said Boleslaus, in great agitation.

Rasinski unfolded another letter and read:

"LODOISKA—We are separated forever—I only am guilty. Throw my ring into the stream; thine I have already cast away! Answer me not; in the overflow of thy forgiving heart thou wouldst perhaps pardon me; but I must not be forgiven. Thus may the torture of thy silence punish me—I banish myself from thy presence forever.

"JAROMIR"

Boleslaus bent his sorrow-stricken countenance to the ground. A terrible storm of conflicting feelings caused his heart to throb violently. Jaromir himself break the tie which united him to Lodoiska! A star of hope beamed through the dark clouds, and threw its mild rays into Boleslaus' breast. Shalt thou drink intoxicating happiness from that goblet which poisons thy friend! Whilst thy lips, trembling with delight, touch the edge of the cup, the lips of thy friend will become pale, closed for ever! No, Boleslaus,—if the dark serpent of guilt enfold his heart—if visions of sombre and melancholy import overshadow his mind and depress his energies—yet, nevertheless, shalt thou take no advantage of the infirmity of thy friend! Be a man! Turn away thine eyes from that heavenly portal which appears to open to thee! It is an unsubstantial vision—thou shalt not enter therein. The rose-colored brightness in which thou fanciest to cool thy glowing heart is but the reflection of concealed flames from the abyss below. If thou but follow the allurement—if thou but overstep the sacred limits—thou shalt precipitate thyself into a yawning abyss. Thou hast no room for doubt here; the bride thy friend renounces is but the holier object to thee. Every thought to the contrary, every hope is treason against the ties of true brotherly love.

In the fiery ordeal of these stormy feelings, Boleslaus' noble heart steeled itself to a firm determination of honorable resistance to all unworthy temptations.

"Well," said Rasinski, after a solemn pause, "what say you to this letter? Is it the offspring of fever, or is his heart burdened with some hidden guilt in which he is involved?"

Boleslaus was prevented from answering by a loud challenge of the sentry, the reply to which announced the arrival of Louis.—The friends greeted him cordially. Their

first duty was to make due distribution of the clothing and other articles Louis had brought, which duty occupied more than an hour.— Meanwhile the night was far advanced, and the weary soldiers required rest. Bernard questioned Louis about Jaromir, but he knew no more than others. With singular tenacity of purpose the youth had kept his secret within his own breast ; he called down punishment for his offence ; he would accept no compassion, nor yet ask forgiveness.

CHAPTER LX.

ON the evening of the eighteenth day of October, the French army commenced its retreat from the capital of the Czars, in which it had remained either much too long or too short a time. Napoleon, however, had not yet admitted the necessity of retreat, since he had not yet been taught the power of the elements to subvert his own ;—he still thought of attacking Kutusow's troops, who made a stand at Kalouga. To attack, was to defeat them, and open for himself a way into the southern provinces. His design was to bring forward his reserves to increase and ensure his means of communicating with Poland ; to make the right wing of the army his *point d'appui*, and thus maintain himself in the heart of the hostile country until a more favorable season should arrive. Many voices had already been raised in favor of retreat ; and apprehensive that the dread of a long and inactive winter would dispirit the troops, they were urgent in their desires to carry it into effect without delay. But there were other counsellors and opposite counsels ; and these, more rash and improvident, from their agreement with the daring spirit of the Emperor, exercised a fatal influence on his decision.

On the morning of the nineteenth, the opening of a pleasant day, Napoleon himself left Moscow. Although the army had marched the whole night, fresh masses were constantly passing the gates of the half-destroyed city. In lines extending far beyond the point of vision, they proceeded forward on the wide main-road. It was not merely the number of soldiers that formed the immense train ; there were also innumerable vehicles laden with booty, the numerous trains of artillery and baggage wagons which they would not leave behind. On both sides the columns of infantry and cavalry moved forward, marching over the fields alongside the road, so as to leave it free to the wagons.— Nevertheless, the enormous amount of baggage obstructed the passage. The Emperor and his suite were delayed by the confusion

arising from the entanglement of the numerous vehicles. It was at this interesting point that Rasinski, who during the night had bivouacked before the gates of Moscow, arrived with his few horsemen through a by-lane of the suburb, to join the army. He was obliged to halt, and perceived the Emperor immediately in front of him. In the features of Napoleon great displeasure was expressed at the impediments he met with. With evident dissatisfaction he looked at the vast number of superfluous wagons. He also cast his sharp look at Rasinski, who saluted him respectfully, yet he said nothing, and appeared only to count, in serious mood, the small remnant of the regiment. At last a passage was opened, and with his retinue he rode through it at speed.

Rasinski, however, could not proceed, but was obliged to await a more favorable moment. This did not displease him, since he desired to be joined by Jaromir, whom Louis had been despatched to bring from the hospital. The marching orders had come so unexpectedly that there had been no time to communicate them to Jaromir. Boleslans, therefore, had taken care to keep his baggage and horses in readiness, and thus Jaromir had nothing to do but to mount. By sending Louis to him, Rasinski had presumed that Jaromir, by his friendly persuasions, might be induced, at least for a friend, to remove the mysterious veil beneath which he concealed what had occurred. The truly paternal sympathy which Rasinski entertained for Lodoiska and Jaromir was so predominant within him, that even the present sudden turn of the war could not erase it. He soon observed his friends at a distance, who approached him at a rapid pace. According to the usual ceremonial of the service, Jaromir reported himself to Rasinski as restored to health and able to join the regiment. He looked pale, and appeared with difficulty to keep himself in the saddle ; his voice was suppressed, and the fire of his eye somewhat dimmed.

With paternal compassion, and not with the air of a commander, Rasinski gave him his hand and said—

“ Welcome to us again, Jaromir, sorry were we for your accident—welcome once more.”

At these words Jaromir lost the firm carriage he had forced himself to assume. With a serious countenance he looked at his friend, yet he had no power over the tear that trembled in his eye. In great agitation he seized the hand offered by Rasinski, but dared not return its hearty pressure. He was only able to murmur in a desponding tone :

“ I am an object far more deserving your reproof than your kindness.”

Rasinski's experienced eye looked into the very depth of the youth's heart; it was now clear to him that some conviction of guilt, and no vision of fancy, darkened the mind of his unhappy friend. Rasinski and his men at length proceeded onward in silence and reached the hills. Merciful heaven, what a sight! Three wide and long streams of soldiers and baggage-wagons wound their way over the fields; the ruins of Moscow seemed inexhaustible, and yet theyan of the masses was lost to the eye at the edge of the horizon. The open field was covered to the right and left with stragglers, both horse and foot. Rasinski halted under a hill, from whence, by their white plumes, he recognised the Emperor and his suite far beneath the hillock in the middle of the thronged wagons.

"What will be the end of all this?" said Rasinski, looking over the mighty train. "How will the army be able to move with such heaps of baggage? My hope is that the first attack of the Cossacks will rid us at least of the half of this troublesome superfluity. How blindly has covetousness collected this ruinous plunder! How miserably has avarice laden itself with a burthen under which it must eventually sink!"

"I should not wonder if the Emperor ordered the whole baggage to be burnt as soon as we reach the open field," observed Jaromir, gazing about with unaffected indifference.

"That he will not do," answered Rasinski, "for he will not deprive the soldiers, who, setting peril and death at defiance—have marched over two-thirds of Europe—of their reward in this so often-promised booty. Believe me, however, that before nightfall they will commence discharging their ballast themselves. See those two men yonder! To judge from their appearance they must be officers' servants, and yet they have put themselves before a hand-cart, dragging it with great difficulty. Their strength will not last them six hours, and still, blinded by avarice, they forget that the distance between here and Paris is eight hundred leagues. How long will their axles last? When one of them breaks, who can procure another? The artillery is hardly able to do it. The Emperor, though looking at it with displeasure, will let time inform the misers of the impracticability of their designs. Look there! a wagon is upset: do you see? Already—half a mile only from Moscow, some one will be compelled to part with what he probably intended to carry with him to Paris!"

The wagon pointed out by Rasinski was overladen with booty—an axle broke, and down it came on the road. Immediately the file stopped—those pressing on behind crying indignantly: "Forward!"

It was impossible immediately to raise the

upset cart, and there being no room to pass by, one of the drivers behind cried out:

"Throw that trash out of the way!"

Immediately an irresistible force was ready to obey the sudden command. In vain the owner grumbled and cursed, and strove to defend his booty. In less than two minutes he was surrounded on all sides; and not only was the cart pillaged of all it contained, but the horses were unharnessed—the wheels taken off, and the body of the vehicle broken up and thrown aside; so that the road was once more clear. The howling fury of the plundered man was drowned in the scornful laughter of the bystanders; no one troubled his head about the matter, or dreamed of affording assistance to the despoiled individual, who might consider himself fortunate that his horses were left him.

"If this happens on the first day's march, at the gates of Moscow," observed Rasinski, "what is to be expected when an enemy threatens these heavy-laden masses? Yonder marauder has saved nothing but his pair of lean horses. The others may think themselves lucky if they save as much from the first feint-attack of half a hundred Cossacks! The fellow now howling and cursing is the luckiest of them all; for he is the first relieved from his useless drudgery. This very day he will have abundant opportunity to laugh and scoff in his turn, perhaps at his despoilers themselves; and before a week is over, he will bless his stars that he has been saved the profitless toil. The difference is merely that he loses to-day what others will lose to-morrow and the day after: of all these thousands not one will ultimately profit by his booty."

"I am glad," said Bernard, "that we are so near the last, for I do not suppose that the regiments in advance can form any idea of the kite-tail they are dragging behind them. After all, the scene is a gay one. The expedition of the witches on the Brocken could not appear more fantastic than the masquerade before us just now. At the building of the tower of Babel it was not cursed with so many different languages as here, and a police record of all the things stolen in London for a thousand years would be but a jest beside the inventory of this motley crew. I do not believe there is a copper kettle—a frying-pan—an old trencher—a pair of tongs, not even a broken stick left in Moscow, so much trash is there heaped upon this rampart of carts." Turning towards Jaromir to cheer him up a little, he said: "Look at that train of wagons yonder, which the Emperor will soon overhaul; that is a company of Amazons, I think, for I see nothing but women, and they, too, are dressed as if they were about to perform an oriental fairy play."

"Why they really are the troupe who

were playing at Moscow," observed Louis.

At the mention of players Jaromir started as he cast a glance at the train. Alisette was probably among them; he had reason for believing so.

After that terrible night he had heard nothing about her, although he had visited the hospital twice, to call on sick officers of his regiment, and consequently had seen Regnard also; yet Regnard had never touched upon the subject, and perhaps he was induced so to act either through magnanimity in consciousness of his wrong, or out of compassion for Jaromir. At all times Regnard was more than punctilious in affairs of honor, but the unhappy turn the occurrence had taken with regard to Jaromir, as well as Francoise Alisette, made his intentional forgetfulness natural! Whether his connection with her—for he had supported her, and was the cause of her coming to Moscow—still lasted; or whether he had left the faithless woman to shift for herself, Jaromir knew not; he would even never have learned that she had been saved that night, had not an accidental mention of the name of the girl by an officer of Regnard's regiment proved to him that she was still alive. Now she was perhaps scarcely a hundred paces from him! The main-road dividing itself here, and Rasinski, waiting only for a more favorable moment to gain it, it might so chance that they would meet each other again face to face. This thought made his heart beat violently. He felt, that if the traitress had unawares appeared before him, he should have lost all self-command. His attention being called to it now by the hint from Bernard, he had time to prepare himself, and thus he determined, if an accident should bring him into her immediate presence, to treat her with the coldest contempt.

"What shines so bright yonder?" asked Bernard suddenly. "It must be the magic mirror of the Arabian Nights. What lies there on that eight-horse wagon? Is it a quiver of forked lightnings, or a living firebrand as a sample of the conflagration?"

Louis and Rasinski looked in that direction also, for in the midst of the black figures who formed the march beneath, there actually flashed something resembling a beaming sun. The crowd of horsemen and wagons prevented them from distinguishing for some time what it was. When, however, for a moment an opening was made, they detected an immense golden cross.

"It is," said Jaromir, in a solemn voice, "the cross of St. Ivan, which stood on the tower of the Kremlin. The Russians regard it as their holiest relic—as the palladium of their capital. From my windows I saw when it was taken down. The day was foggy,

and the evening twilight had already set in. Flights of ravens whirled through the air, and fluttered, croaking about the tall, shining steeple. A scaffold was erected—ladders were put up—capstans placed round about and lines arranged; the workmen were uninterruptedly active, and yet the flocks of ravens did not go away, but with hoarse cries they surrounded the brilliant cross, now in wide—now in narrow circles. A crowd of Russians were standing under my window; there were many women among them. They crossed their arms over their breasts, and reverentially, and in a low tone they murmured their prayers. One of these women, of a tall figure, dressed in strange apparel, with a red scarf twisted like a turban around her grey hair, raised her hands high, and tracing mysterious signs in the air, continually pronounced some incomprehensible words in a mystic tone of voice. The sight was a solemn one, and when the capstans were set in operation and the cross began to bend downwards, the whole crowd broke out into a loud howl, beat their breasts, tore their hair, and as if frightened by the appearance of a horrible monster, burst away in all directions. It seemed as if they had entertained the hope, by their prayers and conjurations, to save the holy relic, and as if horror had now overwhelmed them as they saw it fall by the means of infidel hands. The air suddenly resounded with a loud and dissonant croaking, the rookery of ravens, as if scared to see their old home, under which for centuries they had built their nests, removed from its resting-place, flew away in a dense and dark mass, and disappeared in the increasing gloom of the evening."

"A true picture of that night!" exclaimed Bernard. "The woman you mentioned I have myself seen, I think, on the walls of the Kremlin, the first day we were in Moscow. She actually looked like a mother of witches—a true witch of Endor."

The others were silent, although every one felt himself agitated by a singular feeling. Bernard kept his eyes fixed on Jaromir. How was his youthful appearance changed! Even his light curls were hanging idly and heavily beside his temples. "Is it the same man?" asked Bernard of himself. "Compare him with the portrait you drew of him at Warsaw—would you find any resemblance?" Laying his hand familiarly on the shoulder of his young friend, he said—"Cheer up! Indulge no sad forebodings. The war before us requires courage and strength. You were a soldier once—you are now a disheartened woman! Heretofore your spirits sustained my own—you seem now to despond, and I am well-nigh fallen into despondency myself. Brother of my heart, cheer up anew; shake

off the weight that bows down your resolution, and raise your head again like a man!"

Jaromir was about answering, when a turn round a hill, which had for some time prevented them from seeing the main-road, brought the horsemen into the line of march. Rasinski observing an opening by which he could pass through the chain of wagons, put his men into rapid motion, placing himself at their head.

Thus the conversation that Bernard had begun was interrupted. Rasinski's plan proved successful; unexpectedly he broke into the opening and soon reached the main-road with his soldiers, keeping them between the wagons. "Now," he said with satisfaction, "we can travel on the road as long as we please, and leave it when we think proper."

As usual on such occasions, their progress was occasionally checked; at one time they were compelled to halt for several minutes; at another to ride at full speed. This made the march very unpleasant; and moreover, it had lost its former interest, as they had no full view of the wagons, their observation being limited to objects immediately around them.

The Emperor was behind Rasinski's horsemen; before them were driven a number of wagons covered with banners captured from the enemy. Turkish, Tartarian, and Russian trophies were mingled together.

"Give way! give way for the Emperor!" was shouted behind them, and Rasinski commanded his troops to break for the purpose of occupying only half the width of the road. The Emperor hastened forward for some distance, but suddenly he put his horse to a trot, and appeared to converse with people who were on a wagon by his side. The driver urged on his horses to keep pace with the swifter animal on which the Emperor rode. Thus the wagon advanced by degrees and passed by the side of the Polish horsemen, leaving them to the left, while Napoleon kept to the right of the wagon, in which were seated three handsome women and one child. When the Emperor approached, Jaromir looked at him with irresolution, for it would partly have made him glad and partly pained him to be recognised; the Emperor, however, was conversing with a lady thickly enveloped in rich furs, who, to judge by her attire, appeared to be the wife of some officer of rank.

"You must not lose courage," he said. "Next winter we can make good at Petersburg what we have neglected at Moscow. A pleasant journey to you."

With these words he passed on without observing Jaromir. But the young lady turned her head to the left.—It was Ali-sette!

She was disconcerted; and growing pale, she suddenly averted her countenance. Jaromir's feelings were in a state of violent commotion. Anger and disgust took alternate possession of him; yet by an effort he retained his self-possession, and directing a glance of scorn upon her as she furtively raised her eyes towards him, he turned his horse in another direction. Alisette pulled the veil over her face, endeavoring to conceal the flame of anger and shame which colored her cheeks. No other had recognised her, and now she desired to be recognised by no one. Therefore, she placed her little niece upon her lap and played with her until Rasinski had got in advance of the wagon, which now proceeded more slowly. As soon as they came to even ground by the road, Rasinski broke to the right with the design of reaching the head of the column, it being his main object to overtake the regular troops and join his corps in the rear, from which he had been deterred since the preceding night.

CHAPTER LXI.

SEVEN days had elapsed since the Emperor had left Moscow. The army stood by Malo-Jaroslawetz, which had been taken by storm the day previous. Orders to march forward were anxiously expected, and it was hoped that a battle might be fought against the whole strength of Kutosow, before Kalouga. In a small, miserable hut, in which Rasinski had taken up his abode, Louis, Bernard, Jaromir, and Boleslaus awaited his return from head-quarters, whither he had ridden late in the evening.

Jaromir's grief and the cause of it, as well as Alisette's presence in the army, were no longer a secret to the friends, for he had made a clean breast of it to Rasinski.

In his pure, noble mind, Boleslaus felt Jaromir's anguish almost as keenly as the young man did himself. Familiar with the manly contest of self-control, he had gained the last decisive victory over himself; and thus, in the midst of his own sadness, a cheerful feeling, the reward of a moral triumph, had entered his soul.

Louis and Bernard also felt the purest sympathy for Jaromir, and had already forgiven him his error; both of them, however, were too much occupied by the events at Moscow, as well as by their own wonderfully interwoven existence, to enter entirely into that of their friend Jaromir's.

Boleslaus led Jaromir out of the hut, which was built upon a small hillock. In the me-

lancholy light of the already waning moon, they overlooked a wide plain, covered by a vast encampment and immense quantities of baggage. The Lanja encircled the field with its winding stream ; behind it arose steep hillocks, crowned with dark pine-trees. In those forests Kutosow was occupying an impregnable position. Beneath those hillocks lay the smoking ruins of Malo-Jaroslavetz, which, but the day preceding, had been the theatre of a terrible conflict.

The distant gallop and snorting of a horse interrupted the stillness. It was Rasinski coming at full speed. Jaromir and Boleslaus hastened to meet him. He saluted them, dismounted, and threw the bridle to an orderly, with instructions to give the animal a good meal. He then announced that they were about to move.

"Do we advance?" asked Jaromir, when they re-entered the hut.

"Advance! We must forget that word in this campaign," answered Rasinski, sadly. "One thing only is wanting to complete the Emperor's reputation—a famous retreat. From this day the world will have this also whereof to speak."

The deep-furrowed forehead, the measured tone, with which Rasinski gave this information, aroused a melancholy foreboding in all.

"Retreat?—to Moscow?—or whither?" inquired Boleslaus.

"To Moscow!—to plant our banners on the ruins of the Kremlin!" said Rasinski. "Have you forgotten already the earthquake of the day before yesterday? That was Mortier blowing up the old capitol of the Czars. At noon, yesterday, the Emperor received information that the Cossacks were swarming about the ruins of Moscow. Mortier is in march toward Werreja; he has taken General Winzingerode prisoner. Such is the latest intelligence from that quarter;—the latest in this is, that within an hour we shall be in march back to Smolensko."

"To Smolensko!"

Till midnight the council of war remained sitting. The discussion was stormy. Murat would attack Kutosow. Bessieres, who had reconnoitred the position of the latter, declared it impregnable. Napoleon said,

"We have done enough for our glory; it is time to act for our safety."

Davoust desired that, at least, we should throw ourselves upon Platoff and his Cossacks, and thus open a way to Medyn. The Emperor decided upon a retreat over the Mojaisk. Thus we will have to retrace the sorrowful road we traversed some two months ago."

"The Emperor retreat!" exclaimed Jaromir, staring incredulously at Rasinski.

"And thus the bloody victory of yesterday is also to prove fruitless?" observed Boleslaus, with a solemn shake of his head.

"It has, at least, furnished another stone to our great captain's pedestal," replied Rasinski. "I have seen the battle-field—it looks terrible! Bleeding and mutilated wretches are yet crawling from among the smoking ruins. There is no victory in Russia at which humanity must not shudder. Flames are always there—the scourging companion of the sword. In this way these Scythians carried on their wars in these deserts thousands of years ago. And what a conflict! The valiant Delzon, at the head of his soldiers, makes an attack—a bullet stretches him on the ground. The soldiers, seeing their commander falling, become discouraged; they hesitate—they retreat—the Russians press forward. Delzon's brother, to save the dead body, throws himself alone into the canopy of smoke poured out from the advancing guns of the enemy. Clasping him within his arms, he raises him up, then a murderous ball strikes him also; with the dear burden he sinks to the earth, and breathes his last upon the cold heart of his brother! The Italian recruits have fought for the first time, and like young lions that chase their first prey. No nation is exclusively brave—all men are brave who are commanded by heroes."

"And the most daring of heroes commands a retreat!" exclaimed Jaromir.

"Who knows whether the most daring is not necessary for that purpose?" answered Rasinski; "besides, other troubles are growing. The Emperor is receiving letter after letter from Germany, which make the sincerity of his German allies more and more to be doubted. Marshal Macdonald reports the Prussian regiments fight reluctantly against the Russians, although his bulletins speak publicly to the contrary. With the inactivity of the troops commanded by Prince Schwarzenberg, the Emperor is also dissatisfied; he sees in it that Austria is no sincere ally, notwithstanding the family ties which have united the two Emperors. The agents in the interior of Germany write of secret confederacies of German patriots against France and French government—of widespread and loudly-spoken rumors—of incalculous words—of secret understandings with the very army of the enemy!"

An orderly was announced, bringing the order for breaking up. Within half an hour the men, all in the saddle, were in full retreat.

Rasinski's countenance was clouded; he said nothing, but looked frequently in the direction of the theatre of yesterday's conflict, which lay yet enveloped in the veil of night.

As the road wound round a lonely, sterile hill, he rode up it alone. On its stormy summit he halted, looking over the desolate places of death. The smoke from the ruins mingled itself with that from the watch-fires, which the rear-guard had kindled to deceive the enemy. On the other side, through the woods, numberless stars were seen to flicker in the darkness, indicating the encampment of the Russian army.

A trembling shook the strong frame of the soldier. The wind whistled over the hillocks and murmured through the tops of the old pine trees stretching their branches above Rasinski's head. His steed pawed the earth and shook his mane floating wild in the wind. Dread forebodings, which seemed to paint the terrible future to his mind, gained more and more their power over him. He turned his horse and rejoined his friends.

CHAPTER LXII.

"This night-wind has been rough!—What a fog hovers about!" exclaimed Bernard, shaking himself, as he sprang up from his place by the nearly extinguished fire. "I thought we should feel cold with no more fire than these three charred logs! Halloo, Louis! Get up, lad; have you no ears for the trumpeter?"

Louis opened his eyes and looked at him as at a stranger.

"Why! don't you know me?" said Bernard, jestingly. "You really look as if you had just fallen into this world from one of the planets."

"And it is very nearly the fact," replied Louis, who began to recover from the deep sleep into which his fatigue had thrown him.

"A devil of a night, Louis. The damp fog penetrates a man to the very marrow. But on horseback, perhaps, we may feel better."

As well as circumstances would permit, the two friends made their rough toilet and then repaired to their horses, where most of their comrades were preparing for the march. In a short time all were again in retreat.

At midnight they had lain down to rest, and it had hardly yet begun to dawn; in constant apprehension of being pursued by the Russian army, the retreat was made with the greatest celerity.

As daylight fully came, the fog began to disperse. Rasinski pointed with his sword to some hillocks, enveloped partly in mist. "That is the Mojaisk," he said; "we are now on our old road again. Since it was de-

termined that we should positively retreat by this road, it had been better we had turned into it direct from Moscow. We have lost full eight days, and might have been very near Smolensko by this time."

"Are you going to pass that crowd?" asked Bernard.

"No," answered Rasinski; "we turn to the left here, through the rivulet, for yonder everything will be stopped again. It is a great advantage to us that we need not so strictly follow the orders as the rest of the army. Every one, however, begins to look out for himself. See you how the artillery is proceeding up the hill, yonder? The guns are almost fast in the deep mud, and yet their number of horses is doubled."

"We shall have frost, I think," observed Louis; "the air is clearing up."

"That would not be so bad," said Bernard, "for it is horrible work marching in this soft mire."

"Spare your prayers for the winter; it will overtake us soon enough!" replied Rasinski, in a serious voice. "Our march is troublesome now, but still endurable. In Russia the winter remains not standing on the threshold—it instantly reigns in the plenitude of its power. So don't waste your breath through misconceiving your object."

"I think it will come without our will or desire," said Bernard; "the north-easterly wind blows upon our back, which, however, is better than yesterday, when it blew the drizzling rain into our faces. I scent something like snow in the air."

While thus conversing, they had reached the brook and rode across it, where it was easily fordable. On the other side they joined the artillery, which, forming the head of the train, had gained a considerable start.

"Bless me!" exclaimed Bernard, "how sharp the wind blows!"

With the experienced eye of a soldier, Rasinski looked attentively over the plain. It offered but little variation, extending itself in all directions to an immeasurable distance; nothing interrupted the dead, comfortless grey of this landscape, but the black ranges of pinewood forest at the uttermost edge of the view.

The sun had shone for a little time, but soon the heavens began to be darkened by clouds.

Several columns of infantry had by degrees overtaken the cavalry, which could proceed but slowly on account of the exhaustion of the horses. Various uniforms were mixed together in confusion. Discipline, with regard to regiments, could no longer be maintained; every one protected himself against wind and weather as well as he could. By many it was already found

distressing to endure the toils of the march. While Rasinski's attention was directed to this motley crowd, he observed a horseman among them who appeared to be an officer of rank. It was Regnard.

"Rasinski! Is it you?" he said, riding towards him and giving him his hand.

"It is, indeed!" answered Rasinski, heartily, who had made it his rule always to exhibit good spirits when his men could see and hear him.

"You are easily satisfied—with me it has gone somewhat harder," said the dragoon officer. "One of my eyes has been inflamed ever since the fire of Moscow. I suffer much from it, and these damp autumnal nights have done their best to increase the evil."

"It is a matter of little moment, I hope,—such things cease with the cause."

"Sometimes, yes; like hunger for instance; if the cause, however, lasts too long, the cure will be too late. Such may easily be the case with me. Still, I don't care a fig," he continued, after a few moments; "one sees too much even with one eye here."

"How so?"

"Did you not pass through the battlefield?"

"No; I took a bye-road with my men."

"You lost nothing by that. The whole is still a hospital. Three thousand wounded men are lying there, and will probably remain. I shudder at the bare thought of it. For these seven weeks they have lingered in agony and wretchedness! They are half-frozen to death; the greatest part of them are lying upon rotten straw, and in many cases without blankets! Scarcely their old cloaks have been left them. Their wounds are dressed with cakum, although they are in a state of gangrene even to the very bones."

"Speak not so loud," said Rasinski; "pictures like these discourage the men."

"Pictures are unnecessary; they have seen the miseries themselves. When we were marching through, those who still were capable of moving stretched forth their hands, crying, 'Take us with you—let us not perish here!' The rumor that we were retreating had been spread. They had some comfort in hope before—despair is now their portion. They lamented and moaned aloud; some of them cursed heaven and earth. A dragoon—I recognised him by the cloak—both of whose feet had been amputated, had crawled with his miserably-dressed stumps to the threshold of the hut in which he lay, and with raised hands, as a pale spectre of utter hopelessness, implored my aid as I passed. The Emperor came past at the time, and the wretched man cried, 'Sire, I have

served in Egypt—let me not perish here. To France, to France—my father!' He could say no more. The Emperor then ordered him to be placed in his own carriage, and to be taken good care of. I aided, myself, in raising him up, but before we got him into the vehicle he expired."

"He is happy!"

"Certainly! I can imagine, however, the misery and anguish of those remaining, when a dying wretch sees the future with such dread that the hope of escaping it gives him such strength in his last moments."

"And must they, then, be left behind?" asked Rasinski, shuddering at their condition.

"Can you carry them away?—and can they endure the march? The Emperor has ordered that every baggage-wagon shall take up a man; they will endeavor to save those who can yet be saved. The others will be left to the mercy of the enemy."

"Tender mercies, indeed!" groaned Rasinski.

"They may call themselves happy," continued Regnard, adjusting the bandage over his inflamed eye, "if they but soon fall into the hands of the enemy. Should he tarry long, they must perish in the most miserable manner. The greater part of them can't move themselves.—It begins to get thick again."

The fog had actually descended, moist and cold, upon the fields, making it impossible to see objects at the distance of a hundred feet.

"I have never seen weather like this before," said Bernard.

"The wind has shifted to the north-west," said Louis, who had attentively observed the changes. Wrapping their cloaks more closely around them, the officers proceeded silently on.

Deep silence prevailed—the dull rumbling of the artillery was alone heard in the distance. A few slight undulations of the ground had accidentally brought Louis about thirty paces to the right of his friends. Suddenly his horse stumbled; he pulled up the animal by the bridle, and bent forward to see against what it had stumbled. It was a half-decayed, half-naked body. The face, changed by putrefaction and birds of prey into a disgusting disfigurement of humanity, stared horribly at him. An involuntary cry escaped his lips; and his horror increased when, looking around him, he observed many more human bodies, half consumed, in the deep furrows of the land close by.

"What is it?" asked Bernard, hearing the outcry.

"Look around you!" answered Louis, fearfully.

They had all rode on in the grey fog, with-

but paying any attention to the way or the ground. A blast of wind dispersed the fog for a moment, allowing a view of some two hundred paces.

"We are on the battle-field!" exclaimed Rasinski.

"Indeed! I did not suppose that we were so near," said Bernard, looking around.

With grave attention they permitted their eyes to wander over that desolate and silent field of death, which seven weeks before shook with the terrible uproar of a conflict of nations, and the thunder of a thousand guns. As when, in the dusk of evening, the eye first catches sight of a few stars, and at every succeeding minute discovers more, until at last the whole vault is seen spangled throughout, so did now the fearful signs of destruction multiply, under the horror-stricken eyes of the soldiers revisiting this scene of carnage. A thick atmosphere was momentarily dispersed by the wind: it appeared as though it removed the curtain for all to behold. Horror penetrated the stoutest hearts as this terrible charnel-house gradually developed itself. First they saw only a few corpses, struck by the hoofs of their horses; anon, the numbers multiplied beyond the power of counting; and it was soon evident that every dark elevation discovered by the eye was not a stone, nor a fallen tree, nor a mound, but a human body, or a mass of bodies piled up together. At every step forward the picture of destruction became more and more loathsome. The wind drove a poisonous and pestilential vapor in their faces, an odor so disgusting that the horses, starting aside, would scarcely obey their masters; and only when urged by the spur would they take their way over the fearful road. They saw large elevations, where masses of bodies had been thrown together and so loosely covered with earth, that the storm and rain had almost washed this scanty covering away. In many places the dead assumed the most horrible positions; the bones of some were half covered with putrescent flesh; many were naked and already bleached; —of others, the heads, covered with rough, bloody hair, were sunk down to the ground, the legs unnaturally turned upwards; and of not a few, the arm was lifted high, as if endeavoring to work themselves up from their mouldering grave. Single limbs, half gnawed by wolves and birds of prey, were spread about. Grinning skulls, with hollow sockets or bloody hair dreadfully hanging about them, stared from the ground.

Mingled with these terrible remains were the warlike memorials of the battle. Crushed gun-carriages, wheels, drums, rusty balls, pieces of broken muskets and swords, shining helmets and cuirasses, lay strewn over

the field. At the first view one could discern the places where the cavalry and artillery had fought; they were covered with carcasses, partly entire and partly reduced to skeletons. The mist, rolling in long lines across the field, at one time concealed, at another disclosed these scenes of horror; and at length it was so much dispersed as to allow the sight to range unrestricted as far as the dreadful signs of destruction and death were visible.

"Do you see that hill yonder?" said Rasinski, pointing with his finger to an unsightly ruin, which appeared to rise through the haze. "That is the terrible redoubt where we left so many of our men. Ah! now we may indeed recognise these fields of glory and horror, where thirty thousand of our comrades shed their blood!"

They approached nearer once more, to traverse a place which naturally would inspire them with the most vivid recollections. All were silent. Each one bore its sorrowful remembrance deep within his breast. How much more fearful looked the battle-field now than when the roaring thunder deafened the ear, and the heavy guns rolled over the ground! Then it was the grim countenance of an enraged giant, now the horror-stricken visage of a satiated Nemesis.

When Rasinski and his friends—for the regiment pursued its way on the main-road—approached the redoubt, the horses were scarcely able to proceed, from the number of obstacles covering the ground.

"What can that be on the rampart yonder?" uttered Rasinski, at a distance of some hundred paces from the entrenchment.

"I can't discern it yet," answered Bernard; "it looks like a broken pyramid."

"It is wood which is piled up, perhaps," said Louis.

"That can scarcely be," observed Bernard, shaking his head: "a singular shape, indeed: it would puzzle a painter!"

As they came nearer, the sun broke out brilliantly through the clouds. On a sudden the redoubt brightly shone, while a gloomy grey still prevailed around.

"They are skeletons!" exclaimed Rasinski, who seemed to possess the keenest sight. "See you how the bones are shining, bleached by the wind and rain?"

Not without awe they rode forward, at a more rapid pace, and found that Rasinski was but too true an interpreter. The dead piled up in the interior of the redoubt projected high above the wall. Chance had brought their backs against each other, in a half-upright position. Being the most exposed to the elements and beasts of prey, the bones of those uppermost were almost entirely laid bare; and the skeletons seemed now seated

on a throne of corpses, grinning in triumph. An unearthly revulsion of feeling penetrated even the cold-blooded Regnard, as he gazed on this mockery of man. He contracted his brows and shook himself, as if an ague-chill had pierced his marrow.

"This is Caulaincourt's mausoleum," he said at last. "Come, let us be off!"

To reach the column again, they rode on at a quick pace, constantly stumbling over corpses and fragments. A deep hollow way crossed the field; it was the same on which they had returned to the encampment the day after the battle, and which the next day they found filled with the wounded and helpless, who had sought a shelter there against the severity of the night.

Suddenly a sound of wailing reached their ears. All stopped and listened. They looked far around, without being able to discover whence the voice came.

"It must be in that cavity behind us," cried Rasinski, quickly turning his horse and hastening to a small elevation half covered with underwood.

"Father of mercies!" cried he, dismounting from his horse. The others did not at first discern what gave rise to this exclamation; but their lips and cheeks grew pale when they at length discovered a man in the carcass of a horse, which had been ripped up, and who from his disgusting abode stretched out his hands towards Rasinski, imploring assistance.

"Heaven defend us!" he exclaimed, pressing both his hands against his face; "it is Petrowski!"

Struck dumb with amazement, Louis, Bernard, Boleslaus, and Jaromir sat aghast in their saddles. Jaromir was the first to dismount to aid Rasinski, who stood before Petrowski, pressing both his hands. He had turned the face of the dying man towards Jaromir; in his aspect was visible a convulsive effort to overcome the agony he suffered. Drops of cold sweat moistened the forehead of the hero, and large tears rolled down his cheeks—he was unable to speak.

"You among the living yet, old faithful comrade!" cried Rasinski after a long silence, employed in giving vent to his oppressed feelings. "I made search for you in vain among the dead."

The old man, emaciated by misery and starvation, had still a tear left for this last show of attention.

"Praise be to Heaven! I am thankful!" were the only words he was capable of uttering.

"Oh, Father Almighty!" exclaimed Rasinski. "This living being, dwelling in the bowels of corruption! His food what the hungry wolf and the vulture have slighted!"

Fifty times has the sun passed over him and seen his hopeless misery!"

Jaromir, Bernard, Louis, and Boleslaus hastened forward to lift the wretched man from his tomb; but his eyes were sunk deep into the sockets, and he glared unconsciously upon his visitors. Yet a smile seemed to steal over his features, harrowed up though they were by inconceivable suffering. He breathed but once more—his head fell upon his breast, and his spirit took its departure from earth!

Rasinski held firmly the hands of the dying soldier; his moistened eyes rested upon the pale features, which, though struggling with agony, yet maintained their manly expression.

"Look at this noble brow, marked with scars and adorned with silvery locks! He was a faithful soldier! Alas! that such should be his miserable fate!"

"No, his end was blessed!" said Louis, whose aspirations were heavenward, and who conceived that Providence had dealt kindly with the old man, in directing the footsteps of his old friends and companions to the scene of his release from all earthly want.

"All is over!" said Rasinski, uttering a deep groan.

Silently they remounted their horses and rode to their regiment, which they overtook at the farthest edge of that plain which history, faithful to the mighty deeds of the past, will point out to posterity throughout all generations.

CHAPTER LXIII.

AFTER two more toilsome days the army reached Viazma, where the Emperor ordered a halt, to await the rear-guard, commanded by Marshal Davoust. The troops were almost exhausted, and many, weakened by sickness or wounds, had been left behind.

Rasinski had been fortunate enough to lose none of his men, ascribable to his early care in providing them with warm and serviceable clothing. Giving a good example of courageous principles himself, he had been able to preserve the spirit of fidelity and obedience among them, which, under such hard circumstances, is the chief means of safety. The soldier is utterly lost, if he give way to want, cold, and fatigue. Rasinski allowed no man to absent himself, not one to remain behind; nor did he allow any slovenliness about horses, clothing, or arms. His officers, as well as Louis and Bernard, were active in maintaining this discipline by emulating his example.

At Viazma, Rasinski succeeded in providing tolerable accommodations for men and horses. Three side walls with a fragment of a roof, the remnants of an old house, were used as a stable for the horses ; as, however, there was not room for all, they were changed every eight hours. Sufficient straw had been procured to make beds for them, but their feed was scanty enough. For himself and men, Rasinski had taken possession of a tenement, which appeared scarcely capable of holding thirty people ; by an exact division, however, of the narrow space, it was possible to procure sleeping places for sixty. The alternation every eight hours during which that number slept, while the others took care of the horses, the watch-fires, and the cooking, enabled the commander to give his men a reasonable share of both rest and warmth.

Before daybreak the columns were again set in motion. Their way led through vast pine forests, the dull uniformity of which seemed to increase the immense distance of the army from its native land. Rasinski was ordered to form in the rear, to urge forward those who lingered behind ; for during the last two days so many had dropped off, that it became indispensable to check the disorder as speedily and as effectually as possible. He found that the superfluous baggage-carts, and many others which impeded the march, had been burnt, and the horses belonging to them put before the guns. The columns made but slow progress ; at every step an additional supply of horses became necessary for the transportation of the artillery. The Emperor was compelled to direct that every second horse now attached to the ammunition wagons and the wagons of the officers of rank should immediately be transferred to the gun-carriages. Now it was that wagons, already overladen and deprived of half of their means of transport, were compelled to diminish their loads, or be altogether abandoned. The road was soon thickly strewn with all manner of articles—even costly works of art and luxury were thrown from the wagons as so much valueless trash, and only fit for the flames.

" You recollect the occurrence at Moscow, where the wagon was upset and plundered ? Was I not right in saying, that man was the luckiest of all ? " Rasinski observed.

" We do, " said Jaromir.

" As far as Smolensko, " Rasinski continued, " we shall be able to struggle onwards, although not without difficulty. There are provisions there. But listen ! was not that a gun ? Indeed it was ! A second, a third ! The report comes from the direction of Viazma ! Are the Russians upon us ? "

All listened attentively. Booming sounds

interrupted the peaceful morning. Soon, however, they ceased, and nothing was heard more. Meanwhile, Rasinski had become very apprehensive. Until now they had only had to combat the hardships of a long and wearisome journey ; but should the enemy have marched with combined forces to attack them, it was impossible to foresee what would become of the army. It did not satisfy him that the guns were silent again ; ever familiar with the Russian manner of fighting, he was sure that at least a detachment of daring Cossacks had fallen upon some of Davoust's troops ; and although, perhaps, repulsed, proved the near presence of the enemy's forces. Meditating on the consequences which an attack would produce, he rode thoughtfully at the head of his men.

" Bliski ! " he called, beckoning to this officer, " you have been a long time in Russia, are you particularly familiar with the roads between Malo-Jaroslawetz, and Smolensko ? "

" I think I am, sir ! I have crossed more than thirty times in a kibitka ! " answered the light-hearted soldier, and not without a certain pride that his commander should avail himself of his knowledge.

" How far is it from Malo-Jaroslawetz to Viazma over Medyn ? "

" One day's march at least, may be two, nearer than the way we have come. If the Cossacks had felt inclined, they might have attacked us on the road half way from Viazma to Gjatz."

" Do you think so ? " said Rasinski, smiling a nod of approval at the sound judgment of the man.

" By the Blessed Virgin, Colonel, " replied Bliski, with animation, " I almost wish they had tried, I owe them something yet for this wound above the eye, and the cut on my arm ! But who knows ! we may meet them at Darogobuge ! "

" Why there ? " demanded Rasinski ; though he very well knew why.

" Because the main-road from Kalouga there crosses the road to Smolensko. We shall have something to do there, I think."

" What is the distance between Kalouga and Darogobuge ? "

" About a hundred and eighty versts."

" And is the road good ? "

" That depends upon the season ; now probably passable on the higher, and miry on the lower ground. When it snows, however, it is the best sleighing route in the whole Empire."

" But it looks not like snow yet."

" Who knows, Colonel ? The season has come, and that fruit will ripen as surely as plums in autumn."

" Well, Bliski, return to your comrades ;

I know now what I wanted to learn. You are acquainted with the country, and will find the way when I want you."

"Never fear, sir," answered Bliski with flashing eyes. "I could find the way from here to Madrid." He then joined his comrades.

The road warping somewhat, and there being no longer woods alongside, it was easy to notice a dark crowd of people in advance, who seemed to be very busy. At the same time wagons were driven into the field.

"Another *auto-da-fé*!" said Bernard, laughing as he turned to his friends. "More horses for the artillery, it seems."

The hurry and tumult as they rode up to this spot attracted the attention of the whole regiment. The sun shone brightly—suddenly its dazzling rays were thrown back from the middle of the crowd of people assembled.

"That is the cross of St. Ivan!" cried Bernard, instantly recalling to his mind the occurrence at Moscow.

A large pond was visible near the road into which numerous persons were busily employed casting the contents of the baggage-carts. They beheld the trophies collected at Moscow thrown into the lake. Costly ornaments, taken from the magnificent palaces, curious cannon which the Russians had captured in their Eastern wars, and finally, the great Cross of St. Ivan itself, were relentlessly flung into the muddy element.

A keen, icy wind arose towards evening. Though the tired warriors lay down close to the fires, their limbs, not turned towards the fire, were stiffened with cold.

"The day dawns late," said Bernard to Louis, as soon as they got on the march. "The sky must be overclouded, for no star can be seen. How did the night agree with you?"

"It was really a severe night; every day adds to the hardships," replied Louis.

The day dawned ominously for the retreating army—heavy banks of clouds rested above—the horizon appeared every moment to increase in volume and density. The fog hovered close over the pine forests along the road, and nearly touched the tops of the tallest trees. It gradually began to fall.

"We may still hope to enjoy a clear day," said Louis to Rasinski.

"Truly," answered the latter; although well knowing the difference between a German and a Russian winter, he believed the contrary.

The fog did not pass into rain, nor disperse before the rising sun, but curled itself along the skirts of the woods. For a time there was a marked stillness in the atmosphere, but shortly the cold increased, and the wind

commenced blowing afresh. Suddenly the fog seemed to dissolve—large flakes of snow began to fall, and before time was had to recover from surprise at the change, the whole air was filled with this harbinger of winter.

In sullen humor the troops held on their way. The field appeared in a few minutes to be changed into a rigid, traceless, unbounded ocean;—and how would they be able to trace their path over this desert, where no sun, no star, no distant mountain or tower could be discovered, and no road was discernible? Those warriors who had marched from the Pyramids to the mouth of the Tagus—from the mountains of Calabria to the roaring Belt—from the Pyrenees to the foot of the Ural—in constant battles, and defying all dangers—those warriors felt now, for the first time, the vision of fear haunting their hearts.

The masses of snow became more and more heavy. Not satisfied with those which it shook from the clouds, the storm also stirred up those on the ground, and whirled them in the faces of the soldiers. Drifting over hill and plain, it filled the whole valley through which the road ran.

"One would think that the feet of so many thousands would soon make a hard path," said Louis, "but before us we find no foot-track, and behind us we leave none—so rapidly are they effaced by the storm."

The line was checked. At first Rasinski thought it was only a momentary delay.—Soon, however, he perceived that a serious obstacle must have been met with—for the halt lasted too long. At length an adjutant, who, with the greatest difficulty, had worked himself and horse through the snow, approached Rasinski.

"I bring you the order, Colonel, forthwith to send half the horses of your regiment to the aid of the artillery. They can't get forward; before us is a defile where the snow is heaped up to the height of a man."

"Must my men dismount?" inquired Rasinski, both surprised and alarmed.

"It is a hard necessity, but the same order is going through all the regiments. Even the Emperor's Guard are required to resign their horses and walk. Saddles and baggage remain—the soldiers can follow them."

Rasinski saw that there was no help for this state of things; still it cost him a hard struggle to deprive his men, unaccustomed to walk, of their horses. He betrayed, however, no dissatisfaction. Without delay he ordered the first and second squadrons to wheel by sections to the right, and desired them to ride out from the regiment into the road. They were then broken into half-sections, and followed the adjutant at the head of them, under Rasinski's command. They

had to put their horses twelve-by-twelve to the guns of the nearest division, which in the confusion could be done only with ropes and miserable fragments of harness. The soldiers walked by their sides.

" You do the work to-day," said Rasinski ; " to-morrow your comrades will do it."

Bernard and Louis belonged to the first squadron ; they would also have given up their steeds, but retained them, because they were appointed by Rasinski to serve as his orderly officers. Both of them were aware that the time was past when preference was possible even if allowed. The strong law of necessity, which equalizes all conditions, would soon be put into force. A few such days more, and there were only comrades—no longer officers and soldiers. They therefore rode up to Rasinski, asking his permission to share the fatigues of their fellow soldiers.

" Would that I could obviate it," he replied ; " but it is a fact that to-morrow you would be *obliged* to do what you *wish* to do to-day ; you are right."

Riding instantly to the head of the column, they reported themselves to the artillery officer in command of the division. He directed them to aid in putting their horses to a howitzer—the exhausted team which had dragged it being in the greatest want of an additional force.

In this way it was just possible for the artillery to advance ; but the difficulty was great, for the wheels sunk to the axles in the snow, while the snow and earth together formed a mass of mire which adhered with great tenacity to the wheels. The sounds of lashings and execrations rose high above the tumultuous throng ; and although twenty or thirty horses were attached to some of the guns, the aid of many men was requisite to force them forward.

After some time, fatigue completely overpowered both man and beast. Discipline in the several regiments began to disappear, and numbers of enfeebled men dropped behind. Many no longer continued on the road—the tracks were lost in the snow drifts, and each wanderer endeavored to find a better way for himself ; thus it was that as often as a hill was seen bared by the blast, vast numbers crowded upon it in the hope of enjoying a brief respite from their labors. Many, however, paid a terrible penalty ; for behind these hills were often deep chasms and precipices, which, deceitfully filled, presented an apparent level with the ground. On a sudden, men found themselves immersed to the middle, or even to the shoulders ; others, blinded by the drifting snow, stumbled over their fallen comrades and were precipitated deeper into their wintry grave. Thus was it often observed that three or four men suddenly dis-

appeared beneath the snow. Few only were able to work themselves through ; the greater part lost their strength entirely, and the musket, or the weapon with which they endeavored to help themselves, slipped out of their frozen hands. They would rest a few minutes to catch breath, but the cold instantly seized their limbs—in a faint voice they cried for assistance, but there were none to hear their cry, nor could human aid reach them ; all were sufferers or suppliants, and each had enough to occupy all his energies. When the first victims fell, all hearts were struck with pity and dismay ; yet when their number increased—when with the approaching darkness, hundreds, and even thousands, remained on the field, compassion was swallowed up in dread, and a sigh was all that could be spared for those struck down. The snow, as their winding-sheet—heaven's white shroud—soon covered them. At first, a slight elevation indicated the resting-place of the dead ; but in a short time the desert was even again, and every trace of a grave effaced.

Night came, but no stars were visible. The heavens, becoming more charged, incessantly poured down the icy destruction. The violence of the storm increased, and the eye could scarcely discover a path for the uncertain foot ; all who strayed aside, or lagged behind, disappeared in the profound darkness. Whosoever fell was soon swallowed up in the deep-bedded snow—their dying eyes last opened on the darkness of that fearful night.

Around and within Dorogobuge the army encamped after this terrible day. With bruised and stiffened limbs, the soldiers reached their resting-place. To the weary, the sick, and the wounded, every step had been a torture ; and yet the troublesome preparations for the bivouac were now to be made, and straw and food for the horses, and wood and provisions for themselves, to be procured. With his accustomed zeal and activity, Rasinski had succeeded in securing a miserable house, which gave shelter at least to half of his men. He remained outside himself, by persuasion and example to encourage the wearied soldiers to complete their work for the day by cutting wood, bringing provisions, and clearing the snow from the place where they were to sleep. With sorrow he found, however, that fifteen of his soldiers were missing. He entertained no hopes of seeing them again. In addition to this, twenty-three horses had died. Where would it end ? The darker coming events appeared, the more Rasinski felt the necessity of showing an unclouded front to the present—that they who derived their courage from his might not look up to him in vain. He spoke kindly to them, consoled them, and ex-

horted them to observe order and keep their courage undaunted.

The firm, confident tone of his words, the undeniable truth of them, and his clear brow restored the hope of even the most desponding; and thus trust and fidelity flourished even in their hour of distress.

Some men approached, carrying fresh-cut wood, and a spot was cleared from the snow, on which a fire was built. It was a long time before it caught, as the wood was young and wet; but after an hour that embarrassment was also conquered, and through the foresight of Rasinski—there being some provisions at hand, which he sparingly but equally divided among them—the over-wearyed soldiers were partially recruited.

Louis was exhausted to the last degree; the thought, however, of his lonely sister, and her inconsolable grief in case he should be lost, had given his weak frame strength to endure the hardships under which he often believed he should sink; and perhaps would, if Bernard with his energetic temperament had not faithfully supported him. How would it be when these trials were redoubled? He trembled inwardly at the thought, which could not be wholly suppressed.

CHAPTER LXIV.

SMOLENSKO, "the promised land," lay at last before the gaze of the exhausted soldiers. Its dark pinnacles and towers rose gloomily above the white fields of Ivan. There lay the promised shelter from the raging elements—there, food to satisfy the cravings of that hunger now preying upon its own vitals—there warmth for the frozen limbs—there rest for the weary, strength for the feeble, and a new life for the exhausted in mind and body.

The ten thousand Greeks did not again gaze upon the blue waters of the Archipelago with more rapture, nor did the storm-worn crew of Christopher Columbus pour out their warm thanks to the Almighty for their success with more fervent gratitude, than did these unhappy men, when they at length caught sight of the haven which would put an end to their miseries. Exultation was visible on their pale, thin faces; and a last spark of courage and strength lighted up even in the weakest and most weary hearts.

The advanced guard was already within an hour's march of the walls of the fortress, when from both sides of the road stragglers began to appear. Singly, and in small par-

ties at first, but soon in larger bodies, these starved spectres, no longer maintaining the appearance of soldiers, rejoined the line. These were the men who had lost or thrown away their arms—who had broken all ties of discipline and obedience; and entertaining the hope that alone, selecting their own road, and following their own will, they would better secure their safety—had dared to plunge into the unknown wilderness in search of that shelter and food which they had found was denied to them while remaining with their regiments. Thus they wandered by hundreds like gangs of robbers, and hovered about the army, in front, in rear, and on the flanks.

The wild stare of hunger gleamed in their rapacious eyes, already inflamed with disease or begrimed with dirt and smoke; filthy rags alone covered the emaciated bodies of these marauders, who like harpies grasped at and defended everything within their reach. No persuasion could restrain, no force control a ferocity that bordered on insanity. Wheresoever they found aught that could be eaten, they fell upon it like beasts of prey, and devoured it in so furious a haste, that many fell choked to the ground and expired. No example, however, could deter those who came after; in a state of delirium they rushed into the same danger, notwithstanding their comrades had perished before their eyes. The howlings and groanings of the dying made no impression, nor was a glance of compassion cast upon them. Each recognised himself alone, and the present moment, as the only period of life.

These terrible marauders appeared suddenly, as accident sooner or later brought them to the road from the nearest forests through which they had made their way. At a short distance from the city the crowds became so large that the regiments of the "Old" and "Young" Guard that yet maintained some discipline were alone, and with difficulty, enabled to penetrate. The sides of the valley, which here forms the bed of the Dnieper, drew nearer to a point and contracted the space of the road. On both sides, these vagabonds made their appearance, endeavoring to clamber down the slopes, covered with snow and ice, and reach the road. As they rushed down, numbers slipped or stumbled and rolled over, reddening the snow with the blood from their hands and faces, which were lacerated by the sharp ice. The cries of these miserable beings as they fell, unable again to rise, were unheard or unheeded.

The gates of the city were now visible.—Even among the Old Guard, a military corps consolidated by the strictest discipline, order could no longer be fully preserved; numbers like hungry tigers rushed from the ranks to

be the first to reach the place of refuge. And the temptation and the evil were the greater since many of those gangs of starving wretches, who had traversed the forests as deserters and plunderers, had already reached the walls of the city and thronged about them in the wildest confusion.

For hours many of these wretches, rigid with cold, and tormented with hunger, had, under the very walls of their refuge, vainly implored the mercy of those within, who had without pity closed the gates of the place.

The marching troops heard these dreadful howlings for food, mingled as they were with heart-rending cries of agony. Under a like apprehension of perishing, they rushed forth from their line and endeavored, as much as their weakened strength would permit, to get the start of each other. In vain Marshal Bessières threw himself in the way of those who ceased to obey—in vain the officers endeavored to restrain them by force. The tumult threatened to spread throughout the whole column, when suddenly the Emperor appeared in front, and by a sign commanded a halt. Respect for the sacred person of their great chief, in whom they put their last confidence during these times of distress, brought even the most daring back to their senses.

"Soldiers, return to your ranks!" he said in an austere voice. He was instantly obeyed.

He now rode forward at the head of the troops himself, and in mournful silence, and preserving the strictest order, the soldiers marched into the town.

Rasinski with his regiment followed immediately after the Old Guard. Only half were on horseback; the others walking, while their horses tugged in front at the gun-carriages. As they rode over the ridge of the valley, Louis pointed with his hand across the field, saying to Bernard—

"Do you remember that castle yonder?"

"Ah!" said Bernard, "I thought it was burnt down; it stands tolerably safe on its legs yet."

"I hardly know why, but I feel singularly towards that venerable pile, with its towers and pinnacles," said Louis.

"The same with me; and we are, I believe, less easily recognised than the castle: for when I look at your long beard and the black lines of smoke in your face, I can easily imagine my own appearance. It would be worth while to have our likenesses taken, to show the people of Germany and France what a figure the victorious French army cut on its second visit to Smolensko."

"Be comforted, friends," said Rasinski, leaning back; "a time of rest will come: we shall then find opportunities of appearing more to our taste."

They rode now through the gate of the

upper town; the eastern part is situate on the height, and the western below on the opposite bank of the Dnieper. While traversing the street, they looked ominously at each other.

"Truly," said Bernard, in a low voice, to Louis, "Smolensko does not look much like proving our Capua."

"If the whole town is as desolate," answered Louis, "it will not offer us more to eat than the road on which we came hither."

"I don't understand how we shall ever be able to boil even an ounce of rice here," whispered Bernard. "Look!—the window-frames are all broken out. Every small piece of wood has been seized."

"And yet, I think we had better take possession in time," answered Louis; "for when those wretches shall have forced an entrance there will not one stone be left on another."

"I think so too," replied Rasinski, who had heard the whole conversation; "and I am determined without delay to carry the right of the first occupant into effect: yet, I hope to find the lower town in a better condition."

"Those carcasses yonder," said Bernard, pointing to a by-lane, "promise nothing good. To me they appear exactly as if the flesh only but half-an-hour ago had been torn off. However poor my steed is, I would not dare to tie him up here; ten minutes, and I would hardly find anything but bones in his place."

"There must be abundance of provisions," observed Rasinski, "or the orders of the Emperor have been woefully neglected."

An adjutant interrupted the conversation by transmitting an order to turn to the right, where the quarters of the cavalry were fixed.

With the small number yet surrounding him, Rasinski led the way through a crooked, half-destroyed lane, and reached an open place where a few large stone buildings, which probably had been used for warehouses, afforded stables for the horses in the lower parts, and quarters for the men overhead. Even there the houses were found totally empty. In the upper parts only remained a window-frame here and there; the doors had been lifted off their hinges, the planks torn up from the floors. Notwithstanding, these half-destroyed buildings afforded a dry shelter, and if they could only procure wood and provisions, and straw and feed for their horses, the halt there seemed to promise a time of luxury in comparison with their former exigent state.

In a few minutes their quarters were occupied and the horses put into the stables. Rasinski's indefatigable care had been attended with such good results that since the day at Dorogobuge he had kept all his men but a few who had died of exhaustion. It now became his first duty to dispatch Boles-

laus for the rations and Jaromir for horse-feed, each accompanied by a proper number of men.

Boleslaus took twelve, and started for the magazines. Here he found an indescribable tumult. No sooner had it been made known that provisions were stored there, than the hungry soldiers and marauders, like a horde of wolves round a carcass, thronged the doors and filled the air with their cries and howlings. Several succeeded, in spite of the sentries, in breaking open the doors, when in blind voracity they rushed upon the supplies and devoured them raw. In this most found their death; and what had been sufficient for saving hundreds was uselessly wasted, to satisfy the furious desires of a few. Though fearful the extremity, it became necessary to put an end to this lawless violence. The Inspectors of the magazines were obliged to call up regular troops, with bayonets and swords, to keep their own comrades off. The tumultuous crowds were fired upon and dispersed; they left the ground covered with dead.

Through this frightful scene Boleslaus had to make his way; he performed his duty with earnest, but at the same time with the most painful feelings. Even those who were authorised to receive provisions were so numerous, that hours passed away before he could obtain what he was entitled to. It was with the greatest difficulty that upon receiving his supplies he reached the quarters of the regiment.

Jaromir had been luckier, for at the magazines of horse-feed the crowds had not been so large.

As soon as Boleslaus made his report, Rasinski shook his head, saying,

"These are critical signs! We shall not be able to stay here long—we must exert ourselves manfully if we expect ever to reach the confines of Poland. Under such a total absence of discipline, a resolute attack would destroy us. I sent Bernard and Louis to procure ammunition; but few regiments had applied before them. When the soldier no longer thinks of defence, what may not be the result? Even to receive their pay not a third have appeared."

"Give them only two days to refresh themselves; they will then be more accessible to admonition, and will return to obedience!" said Boleslaus.

"Will it not then be too late? Have they not thrown away their arms? Are they not already an incumbrance to the obedient and willing, without doing anything for their own support or delivery? The Emperor must be enraged at such conduct."

Jaromir, Bernard and Louis came in from the stables.

"It is the first time the horses have been

really well fed since we left Moscow," said Jaromir. "By well fed, I mean that we have given them half chaff, half hay, and together not the third of the usual allowance; yet one can see how the animals relish it!"

"Well, then let us think of ourselves," said Rasinski. "For a long time it is the first repast we have taken together, sitting under a roof."

After the repast, their fatigues soon closed their eye-lids—undisturbed by the pain of stiffened limbs or those half-roasted by their too near proximity to the fire.

CHAPTER LXV.

IT was bright day when they awoke; but perhaps they would have rested longer, had not hunger awakened them. Fortunately they could this time satisfy it. Rasinski left to try if it were possible to procure sufficient food for the residue of their march.

During his absence Regnard visited their quarters and informed them that a general had been arrested at Paris, Mallet by name, who had been endeavoring to raise a revolt by forged testimonials of the Emperor's death; and that although the new dynasty had survived its birth only a few hours, yet the news of it had made a deep impression on the Emperor, who exclaimed to Count Daru:

"What if we had remained at Moscow!"

"Is this the intelligence which has just arrived?" inquired Bernard.

"At Dorogobuge the Emperor had already received the dispatches," continued Regnard, "but he thought it necessary to keep them secret. It is said, too, that bad news is in from the rear. At Viazma a severe engagement has been fought, in which we have lost many men. Prince Beauharnais was obliged to leave half his artillery and all the baggage at the swollen Vop, over which he could not effect his passage with sufficient rapidity. But fortunately, it did not fall a prey to the Cossacks, for it was all destroyed by being blown up. But the rear divisions are reported to have suffered dreadfully, which is credible enough when we consider what we ourselves have lost by hunger and cold! Those marching after us must have found less than we ourselves, and have also had to defend themselves from the enemy."

Jaromir had silently retired while Regnard spoke; amid such desolation and misery, the fortunes of Alisette were not indifferent to him. He felt pity for the unfortunate,

whose indiscretion would now be so fearfully punished. During these last days his extraordinary exertions and sufferings had insensibly but powerfully drawn his thoughts away from the grief on which it ordinarily meditated. But a brief hour of rest and relief had arrived, and immediately this old enemy revived within him.

Bernard and Louis followed Regnard down into the street. The parties had become well acquainted with each other since the commencement of their disastrous retreat from Malo-Jaroslawetz. They now enjoyed for the first time since that day an opportunity of changing their clothes and making their persons comfortable.

The shoes of the men having wholly given out, on Bernard and Louis, was imposed the task of repairing to the depots to obtain a fresh supply. On this errand they set out with but precarious chances.

Arrived at the depot, they soon came up with two commissaries, who stood with their backs towards them. Hearing the sound of approaching steps, these turned about—to the amazement not only of the strangers themselves, but also of Louis and Bernard.

"Ah! met once more!" said the youngest commissary, rubbing his hands, while a sinister smile stole over his features. In the strangers, Louis and Bernard recognised Beaucaire and St. Luces!

"Gen d'armes!" called Beaucaire, before Louis could utter a word, "arrest these men instantly and take them to the guard! They are traitors that have sold themselves to Russia!"

It was only by these words that Bernard discovered who he had before him; for he had spoken to Beaucaire in Dresden but a few minutes in the street, and though his physiognomy had impressed itself upon his memory, the vast difference in his present appearance had for a moment confused his otherwise accurate ken. In an instant rage took possession of his faculties.

"Thou liest, villain!" he exclaimed in great excitement, and stepping back a pace or two he drew his sword. "Whoever approaches me, I will instantly pass this sabre through his body!"

Louis also soon perceived that resolute action furnished the only chance of escape. In a twinkling he bestowed a powerful kick upon the gen d'arme, grasping his arm and threw him down in the snow: the next moment this functionary's sword was in his grasp.

In the neighborhood were soldiers.

"Comrades, help! help!" cried Bernard. "These rascals, who let us starve of hunger, are about to add murder to abuse and robbery!"

But as is always the case in excitement, these words were uttered in a foreign tongue. They were, therefore, but imperfectly understood; Bernard was looked upon as a foreigner, and unfortunately, upon foreigners the French soldiers had begun to look with suspicion. They believed, and perhaps not erroneously, that their allies, especially the Germans, silently rejoiced at the misfortunes in which the Emperor and his army were involved. St. Luces, adroitly availing himself of this feeling, called out in French:

"These are German traitors!—the paid spies of Russia!"

Words producing a fearful effect! The French soldiers, easily excited, and of a quick temperament, instantly set about attacking the victims thus pointed out to their vengeance. Bernard would not surrender, but Louis endeavored to restrain him.

"Do not attempt violence; we might do some mischief!" said he. "Rasinski will not desert us; upon him we must rely."

Bernard continued to express his indignation in gestures of defiance, and in half-uttered execrations.

"We are your prisoners, sir," said Louis, addressing himself to St. Luces; "we shall demand a speedy inquiry into this extraordinary accusation. We are soldiers of the Polish army—Count Rasinski is our commander; he will know how to protect us—I request that you instantly make him acquainted with our arrest."

The gen d'armes took away the young men's swords, who, by the order of St. Luces, were led into the building. The subaltern officer would have put them into the guard-room near the door, where the magazine guard was stationed, but Beaucaire interposed:

"No! they are criminals who have forfeited their lives. They must be put under close confinement. Let it be in one of the dungeons near the fosse."

"Louis," said Bernard, as they walked to their prison, "I fear we have been very foolish in neglecting either weapons or flight. Who knows if Rasinski will ever learn what has become of us until too late for interference!"

Louis seemed to be struck with the truth of this remark. His own generous nature would not allow him hastily to ascribe so great malice even to such an enemy as Beaucaire. But he recollects that perhaps no one more than Beaucaire had more need of avoiding publicity, even in this matter; he thought of the proposals that had been made by the wretch to his sister; and it became fatally certain that baseness like this would not hesitate to seek the vilest means of revenge. He cast a look at the sergeant of

the gen d'armes who accompanied them at the head of three men.

" You are a soldier !" said Louis to the man ; " you will not refuse a comrade a favor ? "

" None that my duty does not forbid," said the kind-hearted sergeant.

" We are innocent. We are the victims of a malicious plot. If our Colonel, Count Rasinski, does not hear of our arrest, we are lost. Give me your word you will let him know it ? "

" Certainly I will, if my orders are not against it."

" He will well recompense you for it ! Accept of my thanks in advance ;" and Louis in his gratitude was about to transfer his purse to the hands of the sergeant. But the man drew back a pace.

" No bribery," said he, touching the cross on his breast ; " I shall do my duty as a friend, but as a soldier : away, with your money. How can this help us here ? We have plenty and to spare of this useless trash ! "

" You are a man of honor. Let us at least shake hands in token of friendship and good faith."

The sergeant silently but honestly held out his hand.

" Here we are at the end of our walk," said he, and at the same time opened a door bound with iron, and descended a flight of stairs, at the bottom of which they turned into a passage on the right hand, and approached a second door, which the sergeant unlocked. Bernard and Louis entered their dismal prison, and the door was instantly closed upon them.

It was a damp, cold vault—a small round hole, about the size of a man's head, was the only aperture for light and ventilation.

" What an accursed place," murmured Bernard—" Cold as ice itself, and wet besides. The chamber of Death ! Only see ; the walls are covered with a tapestry of half-frozen vapor as thick as one's finger. Bah ! the smell of it is poison ! Are we left to make our bed upon the naked floor ? Not a place to lie down, or materials for sleeping. It's a mercy of Heaven we have our cloaks ; or we shoud freeze to death before sunset."

" I hope we shall be set at liberty before that time," said Louis, striving to convey an expression of hope.

" Orestes !" exclaimed Bernard. " Let me then be thy Pylades." And he embraced him with a cordiality too ardent to admit a doubt of its sincerity.

An hour, and yet a second elapsed ; they waited in vain to be called before their judges. The coldness in the damp vault

seemed to increase every moment. Round about, the walls were covered with fine crystals of ice, and the floor was even here and there covered with snow, as the wind had driven it in through the barred window. Their weariness induced the prisoners to lie down upon the stone floor ; but the cold soon forced them to rise again. Only in the constant exercise of walking could they defend themselves against the torpidity of cold. Their hands and feet were already benumbed. Thus passed hour after hour ; it began to grow dark. Louis became momentarily more uneasy ; Bernard whistled away his pains and sorrows.

" I fear," said Louis at last, " Rasinski does not know what has become of us. Otherwise we should ere this have heard from him."

" Time appears long to us, my friend, in this cage ! We have only been a few hours in this place. Who knows what tedious proceedings must be gone through, before he can get at us ? "

Louis was silent ; grief pressed heavily upon him.

" Good thought ! I recollect something, Louis," Bernard suddenly exclaimed.— " When the Terrorists were condemned by the Directory to exile in Guiana, I believe among them was a Collot d'Herbois, the bad actor, but who, nevertheless, succeeded admirably in enacting the part of a tyrant. For the purpose of accustoming them to limited fare in the wilderness, they were fed during the voyage on half-allowance of ship's rations. The poor wretches began to roar out lustily for food. At length the captain, annoyed by their incessant clamor, directed more food to be thrown to them to stop their throats. So we ought to do now—thunder at the door till somebody takes notice."

With this he kicked violently against the door, so that the hollow sound reached through the vault. But he fell back, exhausted in so useless an effort.

" Furies !" he exclaimed, grinding his teeth horribly—" I did not think of the intolerable pain of frozen feet. It felt as if the foot had come between the hammer and anvil. But I was rightly served. Patience is wisdom's true doctrine, and it is folly to battle with our destiny."

At this moment they heard the bolts of the outer door withdrawn, and footsteps descending the stairs.

" It has done some good after all !" said Louis, aroused.

Full of expectation, both directed their eyes towards the door. The sergeant entered with his men.

" I have received orders, to lead you to

your examination," said he; "follow me."

Accompanied by the soldiers, they left the dungeon. They were conducted through the yard.

"Have you attended to my request?" whispered Louis.

The sergeant returned a look which plainly intimated silence. They were duly ushered into a large vaulted room. On a table at the end of it burned a light. At their first entrance they almost swooned, for the room being very highly heated, and they themselves nearly frozen, the sudden change proved too powerful to support. The sergeant, remarking it, ordered them to sit down upon a bench by the wall, and to remain there until he returned. Leaving the three men to guard them, he entered an adjoining room.

"Have you not a morsel of bread, comrades?" said Bernard; "we are almost fainting with hunger."

One of the men pulled a piece of black bread from his pocket, broke it in two, and handed it to Bernard.

"Take it," said he, "but more I cannot give you. That was all my ration to-day, and God knows whether we shall get more to-morrow!"

At this moment the sergeant came in again. He saw Bernard dividing the bread with Louis, and demanded,

"From whom did you get that bread?"

"From me," said the soldier, firmly, stepping forth and recovering arms.

"Thou art a brave man, Cottin, but thou hast done wrong. I did not wish to see anything. Do you remain standing sentry before the door. You others, down again to the guard-room."

The soldiers left the room.

"I could not execute your commission in time," said the sergeant, now accosting Louis; "for Count Rasinski had orders with his Polish Lancers forthwith to join the corps of Marshal Ney. He had been gone two hours, when I went to seek him."

Stunning news for the unhappy listeners! The prisoners both turned deadly pale. At this moment a bell rung in the adjoining room.

"I must lead you in," said the sergeant, to Louis; "you are the first to be heard."

"Bernard," said Louis, turning to his friend, "thou canst save thyself; promise me that thou art willing to do so. If I am here to be made a victim, consider that thou must be the brother of my sister."

"Keep thy head above water, friend!" replied Bernard—but he failed to catch the offered hand of Louis. "Who will condemn thee? Yield not an inch to any one of hem."

"Away, away," cried the sergeant; "there's no time for delay."

Louis stepped boldly forward, and resolutely passed through the room to the presence of his judges.

Bernard remained alone. He stretched himself upon the bench to sleep, but he had exacted too much from his will. Heavier than the burthen of weariness—that of sorrow lay upon his soul. Luckily for him, the examination lasted not long; for, within a quarter of an hour appeared the sergeant, to summon him also.

"What has become of my friend?" were his first words.

"I do not know," was the answer; and in the mien of the austere soldier one could read that he would answer nothing, whatever he might know.

With a bold face Bernard walked into the room. At a long table there sat St. Luces and Beaucaire; two younger men sat opposite to them, closely occupied in writing.

"We ought to know each other," said St. Luces, looking sharply at Bernard.

"'Tis possible," replied Bernard, "but I know not how I came to have that honor."

The contemptuous tone in which he uttered these words gave them a significant sense.

"Indeed!—very agreeable, pleasant, truly. Perhaps this countenance also is not quite unknown to you," said Beaucaire, raising an object lying before him. It was Bianca's portrait, found in Louis' pocket.

"I drew it," Bernard carelessly answered.

"I think I remember that very well," remarked Beaucaire; "it was probably at the theatre in London."

These words fell like a bright flash upon Bernard's heart. He looked sharply at Beaucaire, and suddenly the darkness of his memory was dispelled. He had seen this same man sitting in the box with Bianca. All his feelings were instantly enlisted in the hope of soon hearing something touching the subject that exercised so deep an influence upon his and Louis' fortunes. Forgetting the relation in which he now stood before Beaucaire, he hurriedly exclaimed—

"Who is this lady? You ought to know, sir, for you were in her company."

Beaucaire smiled like a demon.

"You see, Monsieur St. Luces," he said, turning to the party accosted, "we have to deal with fine people. The gentlemen assume their part with great tact."

"Sir!" exclaimed Bernard.

"Silence!" replied Beaucaire, suddenly assuming the tone of a commander. "Do you think if it had not seemed convenient to us for other purposes, we should allow this insolent tone in a criminal like you?"

Bernard's eye rolled wildly. Not the insolence of Beaucaire, but his own rising wrath, bereft him for a moment of speech. He cast an anxious glance around the room, as if in search of a weapon. Beaucaire ascribed his silence to fear, and continued :

"Now, reply to the questions I shall put to you. How came you into the service of the Grand Army ?"

Bernard's first ebullition had subsided. He felt that he must soar proudly above the base villain before him. This he could not better do than by observing that solemn silence which but now had been imposed upon him.

"Did you not hear my question ? How came you in the army ?"

Bernard took a chair that stood near by, moved it forward to himself, and sitting down there, without farther ceremony began whistling a tune.

Beaucaire grew pale with passion.

"Sergeant !" he exclaimed, after some moments, "lead the prisoner back to his confinement !"

In obedience to the command, the sergeant stepped up to Bernard, nodded towards the door, and marched with his prisoner out of the room.

Beaucaire then ordered both writers to retire. He was alone with St. Luces.

"A damned process !" exclaimed St. Luces, rising. "I do not see what we can accomplish with these obstinate Germans, beyond slight appearances. Your passion, Beaucaire, has thrown us into a dilemma of a most disagreeable nature."

"I am confident we shall find the way out," replied the cold-blooded Beaucaire, not without a certain pride in the superiority of his daring. "We have testimony that one of the prisoners acknowledges this portrait to have been drawn by his hand. This circumstance alone impresses me with a strong conviction that both of them have been in secret connexion with Dolgorow. This will be sufficient for a convincing report. Who allowed this Dolgorow to escape over the boundary ? Was it not this fellow, in conjunction with his accomplice ?"

"Do not carry the matter too far," said St. Luces, bitterly. "Of existing connections, at least, we will make no mention. Who wants to prove too much, generally proves nothing."

"M. St. Luces," replied Beaucaire, somewhat piqued, "allow this to be a matter of mine. The circumstance that we even find these two men here at Smolensko, in the vicinity of which is Dolgorow's chateau, ought not to remain unnoticed."

"You have yourself told me," answered St. Luces, "that you have never seen this

property, and that you do not know even the name of it or its locality."

"It is true," interrupted Beaucaire ; "but my ignorance in this matter is satisfactorily accounted for by the fact of my having entered Dolgorow's service only in London, when I could not possibly acquire any knowledge of his private and domestic affairs. I only accompanied him on his travels. Besides which, my occupation as secretary in no respect related to mere family affairs—all of which he himself took care of. The less the proof the more room for conjecture—say I."

St. Luces paced up and down the room, peevish and disquieted.

"I know not what it is that really disgusts me in this matter. Is it that this Master Von Rosen is linked to somebody whom once I knew ?—Or is it some other fancy that deludes me ?—Be it what it may, I fear an unfortunate result."

Beaucaire smiled.

"I pledge myself to its auspicious termination. Count Rasinski can no longer be dangerous to us ; he is away, and I believe," he added, with a sardonic grin, "we shall not see much more of him or his regiment."

"The Emperor esteems him. Should he lay a complaint —"

"He would lose thereby the favor of the Emperor. Or, do you believe it to be a recommendation that two spies are serving in his regiment ? And consider how angry the Emperor is with us and our colleagues, because he did not find the magazines as he expected. I heard of an inspector in the upper town whom yesterday he ordered to be shot. If he finds time to examine our accounts and supplies, you know that —"

St. Luces bit his lips.

"What, therefore, can be more advantageous to us than to draw him favorably towards us by some proof of our zeal ? Such an opportunity as this could not happen more fortuitously ; for the Emperor's suspicions of foreign confederacies are increased every day : and since the last events at Paris he has become quite alarmed. Our prisoners are mutual friends, and what is more—Germans ; they serve probably under fictitious names ; and, above all, are found in the ranks of a Polish regiment. This last alone is sufficient to render them just objects of suspicion."

"Well, then," exclaimed St. Luces, "do what you please ; but I absolve myself of the consequences."

"Do you resign to me the emoluments also ?" asked Beaucaire, sarcastically.

"Certainly, in this matter, Monsieur de Beaucaire," replied St. Luces proudly.

"It was not I who introduced the subject,"

said Beaucaire coldly. " You agree, then, that I make up the report for the general intendant and hand it to him, for the purpose of being laid before the Emperor ? "

" Do what you please."

" You will sign it with me ? "

" Since I cannot avoid it, yes."

" Very well."

Saying these words, Beaucaire went away.

Bernard was conducted back, not to the cell, where death was certain during the night, but to the guard-room, where, to his great joy, he found Louis. Room was made on the benches for the young men's repose ; but entire silence was enjoined, under pain of being thrust into their former prison. In this unlooked-for accommodation the goodness of Sergeant Ferrand was appreciated. Neither Louis nor Bernard opened their lips, and thus passed the night.

CHAPTER LXVI.

MORNING had not yet dawned when the sergeant vehemently shook Louis' arm, and called on him to rise. He started up and so did Bernard, awakened by the same hand and voice.

" You are ordered up to the court-martial. Quick ! Here, take a warm dram and a mouthful of food, that you may hear your sentence with firmness."

Louis with difficulty recovered his senses, yet half unconscious he took the bread offered to him, and seized the bottle of warm mead which the sergeant held in his hand.

" Are we now allowed to speak with each other ? " asked Bernard.

" As much as you please, poor fellows !—Now you have all things freely granted you."

Bernard shrank back.

" Is our sentence pronounced ? " he asked quickly.

" You'll hear it but too soon," was the sergeant's answer.

" Tell us at once, I beseech you ! " said Louis in a quick, mournful voice.

" By Heaven ! " exclaimed Ferrand, " it is difficult for me to say any more to you ; for, whatever you may have done, you are brave soldiers. Would that you had fallen before a battery. It is no pleasure, I assure you, to take aim at a comrade."

" So we shall be shot ? " gasped Bernard, not in fear, but agitation.

" Such is the sentence ! "

" Holy Father ! " exclaimed Bernard, as he threw himself upon Louis' breast, and pressed him vehemently in his arms.

The sergeant kindly touched Bernard's shoulder, and said—

" Show yourself a man, comrade. Death is near to us all. Who knows whether I survive you long ? Do not give your accusers the pleasure of seeing you tremble at your fate."

" Tremble ! " said Bernard, his eyes flashing fire. " Lead on ! "

Striding resolutely forward, they followed their guide up into the council-room. They found it vacant, but there lay some papers on the table.

" That paper there contains the sentence," said the sergeant, as he pointed to one folded up, but with the seal broken. " It is from the commissary-general. A quarter-of-an-hour ago it arrived. I carried it up myself, and heard Baron de St. Luces read it."

" I should like to read it," said Louis.

" Let us see first if we are likely to be surprised," observed the kind sergeant.

He opened the door of the adjoining room and looked into it.

" They are still over yonder. Read—but quickly."

Louis took the letter. Its contents ran thus :

" I have presented your report to the Emperor. If the suspicion amounts to a certainty, the delinquents must be shot without further ceremony, for there needs an example," was his answer. If your representations of the matter be religiously true, there can be no doubt of their guilt. We have here neither time nor opportunity to enter into long examinations ; nor have we the means to carry criminals along with us. Let the execution, therefore, be instantly carried into effect, and without the walls ; so that it may cause no unnecessary alarm."

" So we may yet breathe an hour," said Bernard, when Louis had replaced the letter upon the table. " Well, well, let it come ;—the world has more misery than joy ! "

Here the door opened. St. Luces, Beaucaire, and the two clerks entered, and took their seats.

St. Luces prepared to speak first, but seemed to be confused. Louis looked undauntedly in his face. Bernard fixed his fierce glance upon him, as though he would pierce his dastardly soul.

" The sentence of the council — " began St. Luces, with a wavering voice.

" Sentence of council ! — Sentence of despotism, you had better call it, sir ! " interrupted Bernard.

" Do you defy us ? " exclaimed St. Luces, more confused than angry or resolute.

" I defy everything, now. So do not seek to intimidate me."

"The sentence, Monsieur de Beaucaire," said St. Luces, biting his lips.

Beaucaire, thus exhorted, read the doom of the victims, with a clear and unwavering voice.

"I am condemned to death," said Louis; "although I know, before God, I am innocent; and I know further, that my friend here is most iniquitously murdered, and has never yet been guilty of any infringement of your laws. I believe I possess, at least, the right conceded to every criminal, of requiring the execution of my last will. I therefore demand my papers and my pocket-book."

"These must remain with the records," replied Beaucaire, coldly; "they contain the proofs of your guilt."

"Well, to this also I must submit! It is not too late to ask for pen and paper?"

Beaucaire took out his watch, and looked inquiringly at St. Luces. But he received no answer, either by gesture or words.

"Too late!" said Beaucaire; "Sergeant, are your men ready?"

"They are, sir."

"Then let them enter. We must be off!"

"Then this also is denied to me?—a sacred right, that is claimed by the meanest criminal."

"Circumstances do not permit it," replied St. Luces, not daring to raise his eyes up to Louis.

"Well, then," exclaimed Louis, with an expression of noble indignation, "thus may the crime you now perpetrate upon us hereafter fall upon your own heads! Away!—I have nothing more to do upon earth but to die!"

Twelve armed men now marched in.

"Separate the prisoners!" said St. Luces.

The sergeant came between them; but they reached their hands to each other.—Faithfully and calmly they looked in each other's faces, and tears bedimmed their sight.

"Farewell, brother!" exclaimed Louis, in a manly and audible voice.

"To meet again!" said Bernard, solemnly raising his hand up to heaven.

The soldiers parted them—each section guarding its prisoner.

With steps that resounded gloomily, they left the apartment. Passing by Beaucaire, Bernard cast a look so terrible upon him, that even this hardened villain turned pale.

St. Luces, remarking it, said—

"Let us take care of ourselves; this rash fellow is capable of anything."

Both of them followed the detachment, at some distance.

They took their way through the yard, out by a small side-door of the building. It was

yet but the grey of the morning: lingering stars yet gave some light. Through desolate and dreary lanes, where the fires of the bivouac were yet smoking, and around which were encircled dark lines of slumbering—or, perhaps, frozen soldiers, they at length reached the bridge of the Dnieper. They then marched through the upper town, and arrived, finally, beside the fortress-wall. A few hundred paces from the wall was an eminence, covered with snow, from which protruded a dark pine thicket. This was the place chosen for the execution. An officer was stationed there, with a detachment of twenty men.

The party halted upon reaching this eminence.

"Here, then, is the end of our career," said Louis, pointing to a marked place in the snow, on which he was to receive death. "This termination of our soldiership was little dreamt of, when four months ago we passed this place!"

Bernard appeared to meditate. Something evidently absorbed all his thoughts; for he answered not, although Louis stood quite near him.

"Pay attention, Louis!" he at length cautiously whispered, "for we may, perhaps, even yet escape. If we can but reach the angle of that wood, we are saved; mark those three pines—let that be our rendezvous."

Louis trembled with re-awakened emotion. His heart beat violently. He looked towards the hill and saw the three pines, standing relieved against the morning light. Desire for life was rekindled in him. Hope inspired energy, and great was the transition from the gloom of approaching death to the light of recovered hope!

Seizing a favorable moment, Bernard suddenly knocked down the two foremost soldiers, sprang from amongst his guards, and shouting to Louis to follow, bounded like a roebuck towards the forest. He had cleared the way for Louis, who, prepared for the signal, availed himself of the opening, and sped across the snowy field. The soldiers stood astonished. "Fire!" cried the officer; and a few obeyed the order; but already severa. were in full pursuit of the fugitives, preventing the others from firing, lest they should shoot their comrades. Seeing this, all threw down their muskets and joined in the chase. Louis sought to keep near Bernard, in order not to sever his fate from that of his trusty friend. But the number of their pursuers soon forced them to take different directions. The hunted and the hunters were alike impeded by the snow, which had been blown off the steep side of the hillock, but lay in thick masses on the table-land, and at every step the feet sank deep. Already Louis saw the

dusky foliage of the pines close before him, already he deemed himself to have escaped his unjust doom, when suddenly he sank up to the hips, and, by his next movement, up to the breast in the snow, which had drifted into a fissure in the earth. In vain he strained every muscle to extricate himself. In a few seconds his pursuers reached him, grappled him unmercifully, and pulled him out of the hole by his arms and hair.

Ill-treated by the soldiers, driven forward by blows from fists and musket butts, Louis was dragged, rather than walked, to the place appointed for his death. Even the scornful gaze with which Beaucaire received him was insufficient to give him strength to enjoy in the last moments of his life an inward triumph over that contemptible wretch. But he looked anxiously around for Bernard, to see whether he again was the companion of his melancholy lot. He saw him not; he evidently was not yet captured. The hope that his friend had finally effected his escape comforted Louis, although he felt that death, now he was alone to meet it, was harder to endure than when he was sustained by the companionship of the gallant Bernard.

He was now again at the post, to which two soldiers secured him with musket-slings, his arms behind his back, as though they feared fresh resistance. The sergeant stepped up to him, a handkerchief in his hand.

"I will bandage your eyes, comrade," said he, compassionately; "it is better so."

In the first instance Louis would have scorned the bandage, but now he let his kind-hearted fellow-soldier have his way. Suddenly it occurred to him that he might make the sergeant the bearer of his last earthly wishes.

"Comrade," said he as the man secured the cloth over his eyes, "you will not refuse me a last friendly service. So soon as you are able, go to Colonel Rasinski, who commands our regiment; tell him how I died, and beg him to console my sister. And if you outlive this war, and go to her in Warsaw or Dresden, and tell her that—"

He was interrupted by several musket-shots close at hand.

"Are those for me, already?" cried Louis—for the sergeant had let go the handkerchief, now secured round his head, and stepped aside. For sole reply Louis heard him exclaim—"The devil! what is that?" and spring forward. At the same time arose a confused outcry and bustle, and again shots were fired just in the neighborhood—one bullet whistling close to Louis' head. He heard horses in full gallop, whilst a mixture of words of command, shouts, clash of steel and reports of fire-arms resounded on all sides.

"Forward!" cried the voice of the sergeant. "Close your ranks!—fire!"

A platoon fire from some twenty muskets rang in Louis' ear; he imagined the muzzles were pointed at him, and an involuntary tremor made his whole frame quiver. But he was still alive and uninjured. The complete darkness in which he found himself—the bonds that prevented his moving—the excitement and tension of his nerves, caused a host of strange wild ideas to flit across his brain. Hearing upon the left the stamp of hoofs and shouts of charging horsemen, he thought for a moment that Rasinski and his men had come to deliver him. Then, however, he heard the howling war-cry of the Russians. A "hourra" rent the air. The contending masses rushed past him; the smoke of powder whirled in his face; cries, groans, and clatter of weapons were all around him. He was in the midst of the fight; in vain he strove to break his bonds, that he might tear the bandage from his eyes; he continued in profound obscurity.

"Is it a frightful dream?" he at last gasped out, turning his face to heaven. "Will none awake me, and end this horrible suffering?"

But no hand touched him, and little by little the tumult receded, and was lost in the distance.

Thus passed a few minutes of agonizing suspense; Louis writhed in his fetters; a secret voice whispered to him, that, could he burst them, he might yet be saved, but they resisted his utmost efforts. Then he again heard loud voices, which gradually approached, accompanied by hurried footsteps. On a sudden a rough hand tore the cloth from his eyes.

Thunderstruck, he gazed around. Three men with long beards, whom he at once recognised as Russian peasants, stood before him, staring at him with a mixture of scorn and wonder. On the ground lay several muskets and the bodies of two French soldiers. Louis saw himself in the power of his enemies, whom a strange chance had converted into his deliverers.

With the slightest knowledge only of the language, and stunned by the circumstances in which he was placed, it was no way surprising that for a time Louis was at loss for the words to procure his liberation. But his suppliant look, his fettered hands, spoke as intelligibly. Yet, the hatred of bitter enmity would not interpret it; the ferocity of national antipathy overpowered the more tender voice of pity. One of the three put forth his hand to seize the prisoner's foraging cap—Louis resisted. The barbarian, thereupon, lifted his weapon, and was about to dash out his brains, when a friendly

hand arrested the arm raised for the stroke. It was the hand of a man of venerable appearance, who, covered by a dark, wide, furred cloak, had just emerged from the forest. With a soft, but earnest voice the old man uttered some words of remonstrance. The three men, thereupon, took off their caps, and bowing with reverence, crossed their arms over their breasts. Louis recognised in him his angel of deliverance. His patriarchal countenance and dignified demeanor were a guarantee that he would succor him and not leave him to perish. The peasant, who had before menaced him, now approached with an open knife, and cut the slings with which he was bound. Louis was free! Full of gratitude, he would have seized the hand of the old man, but the latter drew back in deprecation of the homage, as though he would say:—I would not suffer thee to be cruelly murdered while helplessly bound; but thou art the ravager of my country,—the insulter of my God, and dost outrage all that is sacred to us; therefore, I will hold no communion with thee."

The peasants laid hold of him as a prisoner, compelling him to go forward into the forest. As Louis accompanied them, he passed closely by one of the lifeless French soldiers. It was the honest fellow who yesterday had shared with him his bread. "How wonderful is destiny," he thought—"he that pitied me only a few minutes ago, lies now inanimate before me! Honest heart, may'st thou find thy reward where thou art gone!"

In a few minutes they reached the wood, which they soon found thickly timbered. The men halted at a spot where already some of their friends awaited them. By-and-by came others from the direction of Smolensko—many of them with French soldiers as prisoners. Louis looked with deep interest about him, to ascertain if the sergeant was amongst them—but he could not detect him. Other troops soon arrived; it was clear, these men had prisoners with them, for Louis heard their lamentations and groans. In the confusion of the crowd he sought to discover who might be his companions in misfortune. Presently the party opened its ranks; and to his very great astonishment, Louis beheld Beaucaire and St. Luces, half-naked and trembling, in the hands of their enemies.

The eyes of the newly-arrived captives in turn fell upon Louis. St. Luces, concealing his face with both hands, stood silent in fear, and trembling. But Beaucaire ground his teeth with ferocious rage, and muttered a scarce half-intelligible curse, of which Louis distinguished only the words *traitor* and *spy*. Louis threw back an indignant glance, and replied,

" You are mistaken! I am but a captive, even as yourself. God has sent you your punishment!"

The Russians were almost all armed peasants. They collected their captives in one body, and disposed their force around them. Then resuming their march, they penetrated deeper into the forest.

CHAPTER LXVII.

FROM the hour that the castle of Count Dolgorow had been surprised and burnt down by Rasinski, the proprietor had not again made his appearance on his estate. After the enemy's retreat over the river, the peasants commenced a system of plunder in the burning building, and sought to take possession of all that the flames had not yet devoured. But old Gregorius came among them; and in all the dignity of authority, lifted up his voice against their proceedings.

" Check the flames, my friends," he exclaimed; " save the property of your master, and conceal it in your huts; but never dare wickedly to appropriate it to yourselves. The curse will reach every son of Russia, who violates his fidelity to his master."

By these exhortations the reverend Father bridled the avaricious greediness of the serfs, who would take advantage of the first moment of their liberty, to enrich themselves by the property of their master. His word was law—his very look, a sacred commandment. Therefore did they obey him, and exert all their powers to save the castle from entire destruction. They secured all the costly furniture yet uninjured, and carefully hid it away in the deep cellars, which are never wanting in Russian dwellings—even the meanest. Thus the main building of the castle was saved from the fury of the flames, and stood yet almost free from injury. But in the apartments all was waste and desolation. In most of them the windows were shattered, the walls blackened by smoke, and all ornament entirely defaced. The edifice, it is true, still maintained its stately appearance externally; but within, its condition was such that scarce a single room was left perfect, the greater number being altogether uninhabitable.

More than three months had elapsed since the conflagration, and yet the Count had not returned. In the meantime the iron stream of war had expended itself so broadly over the country that it stopped all communication with the interior. Gregorius, who would not leave his flock, but remained as its faith-

ful shepherd, had, for this reason, heard but little since that hour, either from the Count; or from Feodorowna. His hand had blessed her at the altar when she became a bride, and his lips had uttered prayers for God's blessing upon her, both here and hereafter.

The days had passed uniformly; autumn had stripped off the leaves of the trees. The green of the firs and pines became every day darker; soon they were crowned with hoar frost, and finally the snow spread its broad cover over them, the hills, and the frozen streams.

Day after day, the grey clouds of winter gathered more gloomily: the snow swept down more densely; the storm roared more hollow round about the house; and the hopes of the pious Father were exalted. He saw in his spirit the angel of vengeance of the Almighty, riding upon the wings of the storm, and brandishing the sword of destruction over the heads of the blaspheming invaders.

With prophetic forebodings he saw the long, gloomy flights of the ravens spread in the twilight over the tops of the forests; and at night, when the wolf, made furious by hunger, came howling from the wood, even up to the closed door of the house, he thought—"Where shall the armies of the transgressors find rest and shelter, if the hungry beast of prey prowls around even our dwellings!"

Indulging such contemplations, the old man oftentimes wasted the night on his couch, when all around him were fast locked in slumber.

At midnight there was a hasty knock at his door, and a manly voice cried:

"Open! awake, good Father Gregorius! Thy hospitable house must give shelter to late travellers!"

The old man thought he recognised the voice. In haste he cast his cloak over him, opened the window, and looked out. A sleigh was before the door.

"Who knocks thus late?" asked Gregorius. "Do my ears deceive me, or do I recognise a well-known voice?"

"You ought well to know it, good Father," answered the stranger; "I am Dolgorow."

"God of Heaven! You yourself!" exclaimed Gregorius; and he hastened with his lamp to open the door.

The Count stood before him.

"Bid me welcome, Father; you must give me shelter this night, and also to both my companions in the sleigh. I have matters of importance to relate to you."

Gregorius directed his light upon the sleigh. There sat two women in it. Anticipating the truth, he advanced from the door of his house, and approached the travellers. A tall figure, covered with a thick veil, met his gaze.

"Father Gregorius, I greet you!" she said, in a soft voice, and he recognised his beloved ward, Feodorowna, as she fell weeping into his arms.

Her mother followed her—Gregorius reverently leading her into his dwelling.

"What brings you under my humble roof?" said he, with an agitated voice; for the pale face of Feodorowna made him anxious, and she wore a veil of deep mourning.

"I will answer all questions for her!" replied Dolgorow. "For the present be kind enough to give the women an apartment where they may rest; for we have been hurried along, day and night, without rest or intermission. Do not disturb any of the people—for our presence must yet remain a secret."

"Yes, do assign us a place of rest, dear Father," said the Countess in a faint voice; "I am exhausted!"

Gregorius led the women to a quiet room, which overlooked the garden, and was well arranged for the reception of guests, and as was the whole house, also well warmed. The Countess sank instantly down upon a couch. Feodorowna, reaching her hand to her fatherly friend, said:

"To-morrow, dear Father—to-morrow, I will speak with you as long as you please."

"But do you not require now some refreshment—some food or warm beverage?" asked the old man.

"Nothing, dearest Father!" replied Feodorowna, "but rest; and that we shall find here as we wish it."

Gregorius returned to Dolgorow, whom he found pacing the room with long strides.

"Father!" said the Count to him, laying his hand upon his shoulder; "Father, great events have occurred. Russia hails the approach of days of splendor, after a long night of ignominy and suffering!"

"What? Can I put trust in your words? So my warm prayers have been fulfilled?"

"Thou knowest that the enemy is returning!"

"True—but I fear, only to escape from the winter of Russia."

"The winter of Russia has overtaken him. It is too late to escape. He will not again see the boundaries of the country over which he so haughtily broke. Wouldst thou believe we have indeed burned Moscow? Does not the mariner cast away into the sea the costliest goods, so that he may again raise buoyant upon the waves the vessel which has been unhappily stranded upon a shoal? Does not the pirate blow up himself and his enemy at once? And are not Russia's sons men that are able to do the same? Old man, learn to think better of us! The flames of Moscow were not kindled by an enemy's torch. Its splendor will beam upon the most

dreadful, but also the mightiest deed in the annals of Russia."

"What?" exclaimed Gregorius, raising his hands in astonishment—"What?"

"Let this pass, now; it is as I have told you; but we have more important matters to speak about. From that night of horror, uprose the thunder-cloud of ruin, pouring down its vengeance upon the rash man who led the armed hosts of Europe to ravage and desolate our country. He will live to see the day of ignominy, when he shall himself turn to flight. The pride of the invincible is broken—vengeance has overtaken him—ere this we had hoped to annihilate him. It is now too late, indeed; but he will not escape his destiny. Listen to me attentively, worthy Father, for your aid is also required. You will not have forgotten how the nuptials of my daughter were interrupted. You see her now in the mourning veil of the widow, for her husband is no more. As we fled, enemies overtook us close to the forest behind the garden. A bullet struck the Prince; he sank, but we succeeded in concealing him in the forest. Upon a litter of twigs we carried him to the next village, and there we found means to transport him slowly to Moscow. We were followed closely by the enemy, whose approach kept us constantly in motion until we reached Moscow, for he preferred death to the horror of falling into their hands. From Moscow, I myself hastened back to the army. I fought at Borodino, where we lost nothing beyond a wilderness covered with dead bodies. The Frenchman paid dearly for his victory there. Wounded, although slightly, I repaired to Moscow, where the Prince in his palace, attended by me and his wife, lingered on his sick couch. He had been unable to obtain rest at first, and in consequence, the wound had become worse—to that degree, that there was little hope of recovery. The enemy soon appeared before the capital. During the investment Ochalskoi struggled with death. We had carried him into a remote wing of the palace, where we could have remained in concealment if the burning of the city had not been determined on. With the setting sun, Ochalskoi closed his eyes forever. We waited only for night to fly in secret from the palace. But even the dead body of my son-in-law we would not leave to the enemy, for I had promised the dying man to spare no pains to deposit his remains safely in unpolluted ground. We succeeded in gaining the open fields—the flames of Moscow lighting us on our flight. Soon we reached the thick forest, and beyond it the road to St. Petersburg. I repaired, accompanied by my wife and daughter to our Emperor. From thence was now spread the broad net into which we allured the

arch-enemy of our country. With hopes of peace we kept him in suspense, till he finally discovered, that himself, so long accustomed to delude others, was this time the deluded. Yet, even then there was time to retreat, although at great cost, beyond the boundaries of Russia. But his pride struggled long against the disgrace of a retrograde movement. In his boasted invincibility he tried to cleave himself a new path. It failed him; his hour was come; he must turn and flee. But it was now too late. Already the fine threads we had spun around our arch-enemy began to contract. The Almighty was invoked to our aid—for it was a holy work. He commanded his sun to shine deceitfully, veiling with his mild beams the proximity of howling winter—that fierce destroyer who now suddenly breaks forth from his ambush. No flight can save them. For this I came hither. Now, Father, it becomes us to awaken the sons of Russia with holy resentment against these proud transgressors who have laughed at our tears—our groans, and our prayers. Thou must aid me in stirring up the people, gathering them, and leading them against the enemy. For this purpose have I come hither from the capital. I hastened as the wind—for I hoped we should reach Smolensko before the French Emperor, and make ourselves, by a sudden surprise, sure of the fortress. Then he would have fallen here in the heart of Russia. But that is now too late. I know that he has been here since yesterday. It was only with great peril, and on by-ways, through the forests that I could make good my course hither. But where I crossed the great road, I saw already awful traces of the ruin that had overtaken him. It is covered with dead and fragments. Not one ought to escape—not one must be permitted to tell the tale of disaster at home. Only by the dead shrine—by the terrible disappearance of every trace—should those at home learn what fate has overwhelmed their chief and his followers. When the morning dawns, Gregorius, assemble the people by the tolling of the church-bell. Fill their hearts with the flame of just indignation; call upon them for vengeance upon the enemies of their country and their God. Not even children or women should remain unemployed. Therefore, I brought both wife and daughter along with me, that they may give an example of the duty of noblewomen inhabiting Russia.—Then I will come amidst them; send some out as messengers round about, and before evening sets in we shall have armed thousands to lead against the enemy. They are to break out of the recesses of the forests as the lion upon his prey; they are to rush suddenly upon the disheartened fugitives—

Even as the black thunder-cloud pours down its hail-stones upon the scattered flock. That is now our duty, Gregorius ! Thou wilt help us to perform it manfully."

"As certain as the face of the Lord shines upon my grey hairs," replied the old man, in a tone of inspiration, and raising his right hand to Heaven.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

WITHOUT the loss of a moment, or looking behind him, Bernard reached at full speed the angle of the forest. His pursuers were close upon him, but the golden prize of liberty that glittered before him gave him wings. God's hand protected him ; for although some bullets, in passing by, nearly grazed his head, yet none struck him.

Now the thicket covered him. Although it checked the speed of his flight, it concealed at the same time, the direction of it, and presented the same obstacles to his pursuers. Bending forward, and holding his left arm over his eyes, he rushed headlong forward, not caring for the shrubs, that lacerated his hands and face. Finally his breath failed ; he stood still for a moment, for respiration. He listened anxiously, if perchance there were to be heard any steps behind him. All around him was silent as the grave. After a brief rest, he cautiously advanced somewhat deeper into the forest, until he reached a dense thicket that would have concealed him even from any passing close to him. It was not before reaching this point, that he allowed himself a longer rest, to consider what was next to be done.

"Thou art saved for this time," thought he, breathing deeply ; and thankfully did he raise his eyes to heaven. "Would that Louis were but here ! And then !—aye, what then ? Both of us in the solitude of the desert, abandoned to the cold, to hunger, to the fury of the inhabitants ? Shame on thee, Bernard ! wilt thou despair even in the very hour when thou hast got proof that there is nothing lost where all is not lost ! Look well to the future !—watch it narrowly, even as a fencer watches his adversary ; the attack and the defence are alike important."

With these thoughts he continued his way in the direction of the hill with the three pines. In the shadows of the forest twilight was yet lingering ; silence brooded over solitude. Suddenly he heard the sound of dropping shot.

"Holy Father ! should it be Louis, whom they have seized again," exclaimed Bernard, standing as though rooted to the ground, with his body bent forward in the

direction of the sound. There fell again the sound of shot, and yet once and again ! "No," he thought, his breast relieved from painful oppression, "that is not the dreadful sound, I feared." But still he felt quite unable to explain this firing—especially as it was mingled with confused clamor—for it was echoed from a distance, and the tumult reached him but partially and heavily through the still forest.

"If I could but learn where the enemy could have sprung out of the soil, I should believe it to be a fight. I might know, indeed, if I could but get a glance over the plain !"

He hurried towards the edge of the forest, but before he had reached it, the firing and alarm was over. He would have made further researches, had he not heard steps in the neighborhood, as of one who walked rapidly through the brush-wood.

Bernard now became irresolute. He hesitated whether to hasten to reach the point of their rendezvous as agreed upon, or to go back and strive to discover what had become of Louis. After short reflection he chose the latter.

"He may wait for me a quarter of an hour longer ; it is better that he endure this, than that I perhaps leave him without help, and without the consolation of a friend, in the hands of his enemies. Is he already a victim ? No, no ! it is impossible ! But if he has fallen, I desire to fall also !"

There was a certain dauntless pride in Bernard's heart, which confirmed him in this resolution. He would not allow it to be said, that he, to save himself, had forsaken his friend.

Bernard's internal anxiety increased ; the more impetuous became the struggle of his feelings, the nearer he approached the place where he hoped to obtain certainty respecting the fate of his friend. At length he reached the edge of the forest, and could look over the hill where death had but lately awaited him. He was alone—no sign of life within sight or hearing ; Bernard ventured forth. The snow was crossed by numberless tracks ; bodies of horsemen, too, must have taken their way over the hill. He picked up a military cap—it was stained with blood ; it offered undeniable evidence that a skirmish must have been fought here. At a distance he observed dead bodies. What !—if Louis should be among them ? He hastened on at full speed. Heaven be praised ;—no !—they are French uniforms !

Three men lay stretched out upon the snow. The nearest one was recognised by Bernard ; it was honest-hearted Cottin, who had divided his ration ; the other two were unknown to him. His joy on account of the appearances in favor of Louis' escape left

no room for the indulgence of grief over the kind-hearted Cottin. His flight must have been successful. Yes—he must be waiting at the three pines on the hill.

Yet not alone in obedience to this generous impulse did Bernard retrace his steps. Absorbed in reflections he had not seen "a body of troops issue from the gate of the city. These men had been detached, but too late, to support their comrades. They had already marched some distance into the plain, and had approached within a few hundred paces, when Bernard first perceived them. But time and space were yet in his favor; and he fled speedily on his way to the place agreed upon for their meeting.

After half an hour he reached the spot. The pines stood alone upon a height, surrounded only by low bushes, which did not intercept his view. In front he saw the towers and walls of Smolensko, behind which arose the snow-covered heights which ran parallel with the banks of the Dneiper. In the distance a long blue line of woods stretched athwart the horizon. This line indicated the road from Moscow. On his right hand the view was interrupted by a wood in his immediate vicinity. On the left hand he looked into a wider plain, but the eye fell only upon interminable pine forests in the distance, which seemed to cover the view in that direction. Behind him, and on his own side of the river, was a second line of heights, which obscured his further observations; but he knew that beyond them the plains were open and extensive.

He cast only a superficial look over this dreary, desert landscape; his eye searched for Louis in every direction. He could discover no trace of him. At first gently, then louder and louder, he called the name of his friend; but his voice echoed in vain through the deep solitude of the waste.

Now he became anxious. A thousand possibilities presented themselves to his suspicion—each bordering upon the truth, but not really attaining it.

He wandered in every direction over the hill, and searched every bush. He carefully examined the surface of the snow, in the hope of discovering some track of the wanderer. But all in vain. He enlarged the circumference of his observation, and actually twice or thrice made the entire circumference of the hill; but he found no track of human footsteps save his own. And the conviction was forced upon him, that none but himself had approached the hill.

This conviction fell with a heavy weight upon his breast. Was Louis saved, or was he not? Had he misunderstood him? Had he changed his flight in another direction? Or had circumstances forced him to seek safety

on the other side of the forest? Did he perish in the battle?

These and many other questions suggested themselves to the anxious Bernard; but he knew of no answer to them. This one dreadful calamity was more and more deeply impressed upon him—that he was separated from his friend, and that only some favorable turn of fortune which lay beyond his control could again bring them together.

Noon advanced. By long wading through the snow, Bernard's feet had become thoroughly wet; and his legs were weary in the extreme. Hunger came upon him with powerful acuteness; for the body, well nourished for two days, had regained strength, so as to be able to resist for a time the cravings of this great enemy; but the more intolerable, therefore, was the present pain. Some resolution must be taken. Of two alternatives a choice must be made: he must either return to the city, and deliver himself up to certain and ignominous death; or he must venture to proceed alone on his perilous journey, where countless panics and privations awaited him, and to encounter which, the faint hope of ultimate safety was scarcely a sufficient incentive.

And whither should he take his way? Without weapons to defend himself against a hungry wolf, or to fell wood for firing; without food, without money to purchase it, it seemed impossible for him to make good safe return. There remained nothing but to retrace his way, so as to reach the corps of Ney, which was at least two days' march in the rear. If Louis was free, he reflected, such also would be his only resolution. Therefore was this the only chance on which he could rely to meet his friend again.

He broke off a short pine-branch, and trimmed it with his pocket-knife, so as to make it serviceable, not only as a walking staff, but as a weapon of defence in case of need. Thus he commenced his dreary way to regain the great road. His prospects within and without were dreadful enough. He had to pass through an almost impenetrable forest, and wade through snow knee-deep. His progress was slow, indeed; and although the road was distant only about half-an-hour's ordinary walk, yet after two hours' toil he had not yet reached it. He dared not enter it in the immediate vicinity of Smolensko; and the many obstacles in his way, and the circuitous paths he was obliged to follow, had more than doubled the direct line. His strenuous exertions and his hunger, at length so exhausted his bodily powers, that he was obliged to lie down. With some twigs he brushed the loose snow aside, and made himself a rude couch, upon which he stretched himself to rest. His

great effort now was to avoid sleep, for he knew well that sleep would become torpor, and torpor terminate in death. Yet much effort was not requisite ; for the pangs of hunger and the torments of his thoughts were sufficient to drive sleep away, while as yet mere bodily fatigue was the least of the evils he endured. To allay in some measure the pains of hunger, he cut the young resinous shoots out of the pine twigs, and tried to eat them. This bitter food, and some snow he had taken to quench his thirst, was the only refreshment attainable in his present desperate situation. After an hour of rest he started anew, and soon reached the great road. But what a view presented itself to him ! It was too plainly marked out with half-naked bodies, projecting out of the snow. Small hillocks, lightly covered with snow, against which the foot of the traveller continually stumbled, were the graves of as many miserable sufferers. Weapons cast away, pieces of uniforms, baggage, dead horses, would have rendered the way taken by the army conspicuous enough ; even if there had not been visible a great broad road, deeply hollowed out by the artillery and baggage-wagons.

A silent horror crept through Bernard's frame, as he found himself now alone amidst the traces that indicated the dreadful path of desolation which death had pursued through the wilderness of snow. The road assumed the appearance of an immensely lengthened grave-yard,—but where no hand of religion or friendship had interred the dead. A shroud of snow formed alone the cold covering of the fallen victims of ambition. Bernard expected soon to reach a village. Beyond a turn in the road it lay before him. But there was no longer a house to be recognised ; all were torn down or burnt. Here and there a tall chimney and charred wall projected through the snow. He rightly conjectured that some troops had bivouaced in the neighborhood, and that the men had used all the wood for their fires. He soon discovered, also, the dark and yet smoking fire-places along the edge of the forest. He approached them in the hope of finding something that might appease his hunger. In vain ! Here there were no dead bodies, for here it was that the strong and hearty had rested, and the fires had protected them from the cold. Bernard thrust his staff into the smouldering ashes and uncovered a yet burning log. It was a proof that the place had been left only that morning. On the snow he found a button ; he raised it. A thrill of joy passed over him ; he saw upon it the devices of his own regiment. This small but important token gave him new hope. Rasinski had halted here. As it was

not until afternoon that he marched out of Smolensko, he must have bivouaced here for the night, and was perhaps scarcely half a day's march distant from the place.

If Bernard could but have obtained a morsel of food, and could have rested only a few hours, he would have been able to reach his friends perhaps before night. But he was too far exhausted by bodily fatigue, over and above the painful emotions of his mind. Now, for the first time, he felt himself unnerved. His energies were shaken. Bodily weakness unmanned him. His heart sunk within him as the dreary sense of solitude and desertion came over him. The unflinching resolution with which he would arouse the courage and resources of others, was unequal to the task of arousing himself. He was utterly overcome.

He folded his arms in silence, and bent himself forward in a crouching position, on account of the severity of the cold. He sat against a half-ruined wall, and was soon absorbed in disheartening reflections.

Silence pervaded throughout. The dark pine forest stood before him in grim array ; the trees bent their branches to the earth with the weight of the snow ;—grey clouds floated slowly and heavily over the dismal landscape. Nature appeared in a state of torpidity. All was motionless, frigid, and repulsive.

"What further need of suffering ?" said Bernard, suddenly rising and stepping forward. "Do not thousands slumber here before me ? The end is but to sink into the cold arms of death. The pain will be short : for an instant only can the hand of death be upon thee ; and in an instant, there is an end at once of all pain and trouble."

Then a voice seemed to whisper—

"Why repine ? Beyond these clouds of storm is the blue expanse of day and life, which once thou hast seen. Even when surrounded by friends, and indulging in pleasures, wast thou happy ? Was there not some hidden perplexity—some yearning—preying upon the unsatisfied heart ? Did the brilliancy and variety of life's pleasures then administer comfort to the weary breast ? Thou didst drink of the cup of pleasure, but it did not quench thy burning thirst ; it only often augmented thy desires ! And now, when the hour of rest is at hand, thou turnest from it with horror and disgust ! Thou wilt cling fondly to a miserable slavery, rather than submit to the terms of thy redemption. Is hope, also, so delicate a plant, that it must needs perish in this ice-bed ? Is the whole force of manhood insufficient for the resuscitation of that spark which should never die ? Look the spectre of despair steadily in the face, and he will quail to the dust be-

neath the eye of a *man*. It tarries with thee, only because a vain and foolish imagination chooses to sport with its unworthy creations. The mirror in which these phantoms are seen is false. Break it—and they vanish forever!"

But in vain did reason contend with the tremendous reality. In vain did the spirit endeavor to rend the bond that held it in subordination to the wants of the body. Despair still clung with tenacity ; and Bernard felt its cold influence stealing deeper and deeper into his heart, without the power either to fly or resist.

"Here let it be, then—beside this fallen tree," he uttered, folding his cloak around him, and throwing himself on the ground.

CHAPTER LXIX.

BERNARD had scarce lain down when he heard a noise in the wood, that struck him as the footstep of a man. Starting, he looked about, and shortly observed the low under-wood shaken, and presently open. A strange and singular figure stepped out before him—a man clothed in grey fur, with a red cloak about his head. He looked cautiously about him.

"Who are you?" he exclaimed in French, as his eye rested on Bernard.

"I live!" answered Bernard, raising himself painfully.

"But it looks as though that would not be long," replied the stranger. "Are you worn down with hunger?"

Bernard nodded his head.

"Then, perhaps I can help you," said the other, approaching ; "but tell me, which way runs the road to Smolensko?"

"Two hundred paces below this spot is the road."

"Thank God! And how far to the city?"

"Four hours' travel."

"Any Cossacks on the road?"

"No; I have seen none."

"Heavenly Father! thou wilt yet save me!" Ejaculating these words, the stranger sank upon his knees, raising his eyes gradually upwards, while abundant tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Here, my good friend, help yourself," he said, after a brief pause ; holding out a piece of bread to Bernard : "thou hast refreshed me—I will refresh thee. Partake ; and here is also something to drink." At the same time he drew a bottle of brandy out of his bosom, and presented it to Bernard.

"So then, the end is not yet!" murmured Bernard, with deep emotion. "Thanks to you, friend; you are my preserver!"

"And thou art mine!"

"But from whence do you come, by the way of the forest?" asked Bernard.

"From a place seven-fold more terrible than the jaws of hell!" replied the stranger, as he sat down. "The day before yesterday, hunger drove me, with many others of my comrades, out of the ranks of the regiment. Our object was to seek food in the nearest villages. Suddenly, in the midst of the forage, a horde of peasants fell upon us, and began butchering us without mercy. We fled in every direction : but there were the cursed Cossacks at hand, who pursued us as shepherd dogs pursue the scattered sheep, and drove us back into the hands of the peasants."

"But the first fury of these villains was satisfied?"

"With stripes and blows they collected us together in a body, and tied us together like dogs, driving us before them. We trusted they would have mercy upon us, and carry us away into generous captivity. Woful mistake! Having arrived in a village, about two hours' journey from the road, they first stripped us, so that we stood half naked in the piercing cold. They then thrust us all together into the church. Crowding closely together, we strove to keep each other warm. But this did not last long ; two of us were taken out again. Soon after, we heard the report of fire-arms, in single discharges, with considerable intervals. After each shot, a wild shout seemed to rend the air. At first, we could not comprehend what this signified ; but when, by the help of some of the men, I climbed up to a small window, I saw—may the devil seize the rascals!—I saw they had bound our comrades to a tree, and were firing at them as at a target!"

Bernard grew pale.

"I got down again, and betrayed nothing ; for there was nothing to be done to help us.

"Shooting at a mark," said I ; "nothing more."

"But it rankled in my breast. The door being opened again, the blood-hounds led out two more victims. I was silent, because it would presently grow dark, and I hoped to save ourselves during the night. In the night we broke open the door leading to the tower, and by means of the bell-rope succeeded in letting ourselves down. The sentinel before the church had fallen asleep. I plunged his own side-arm into his heart ; the villain never moved a muscle. Then I threw over me the fur of the Russian, and, taking his arms, I passed on to the guard-room, at the end of the village. My comrades I directed to follow me in silence. Here lay all the rascals snoring, and beastly drunk—peasants and Cossacks all mingled together. Their cloaks and furs they had thrown up in a heap ;

for there was a suffocating heat in the room. In the corner there stood a basket of bread and some bottles of brandy. My first thought was retaliation for our murdered countrymen, by burning the whole together; but the opportunity now being favorable, I took three of the men, and we packed up as many clothes and as much food as we could, and carried them outside. At once we hastened away with our treasures to a neighboring thicket, and honestly divided the spoil. Our preparations for departure were speedy enough; but the peasants must have discovered our flight betimes, for suddenly they were close upon us. It was then each man for himself. We fled in all directions whithersoever accident might lead. I succeeded in reaching a thick wood, where I concealed myself until the tumult had passed by. I then struck cautiously in the direction of the main-road. As long as it was dark I got along prosperously; but at daylight, the forest seemed alive with Russian scouring parties; and I had to resort to every precautionary measure to enable me to escape their observation. Before an hour had passed, they were close upon my heels. I soon lost all correct notions of my way, and despaired of reaching the great road. But I hope now, with God's help, to reach Smolensko this night. Hereafter I shall take good care to keep in the ranks, and die honorably like a soldier, instead of a prey to these monsters in human form. A soldier may die a nobler death than as a target for boors!"

"All true enough, my worthy friend," replied Bernard, whom the food he had swallowed had wonderfully restored; "and I wish you all success. I hope to gain my object, as I hope you will obtain yours. Even in our precarious position, where every hour is full of peril, we need not despair—not even if Death should be staring us in the face. He may lay his hand upon us; but we can leave him our cloak, and slip out unhurt."

"Aye, aye, comrade;—courage must survive. But what were you saying about your object? Where are you bound?—onward?"

"No."

"To the rear? What, back again among those devils? Are you crazy?"

"Death is more imminent here than there."

"How so?"

Bernard after a moment's reflection related his story, convinced that this honest soldier would not betray him.

"Accursed generation of vipers! Venomous reptiles! These pen and ink scoundrels!" Thus did the honest soldier anathematize the devoted objects of his hatred, when Bernard had ended his narration. "But all that you need not care for. Here danger

lurks in every step; for the enraged peasants are skulking like wolves behind every tree. A single man cannot escape; therefore, I advise you to come with me to Smolensko. Who knows you? You can put on my fur dress. Who asks now, who or what one is? Each has enough to do for himself. Have we not, alas! thousands of stragglers? Well, come along with me. I'll carry you safe in, as sure as my name is Jean Lacoste, a true Norman. Come, let us be off. It is getting dark; we have had some rest;—the nearer to France the better!"

They arose and walked along in conversation with each other. Suddenly they heard the sound of a shrill whistle from the forest. Bernard listened in alarm: but Lacoste, seizing his arm and drawing him hastily forward, cried:

"Run, run—as fast as your legs can carry you!—the devils are close upon our heels!"

Bernard mechanically followed the rapid stride of his companion, although he could not yet believe in the imminent danger—having never until now been a witness to an hostile surprise of this nature.

"If we can only get round that point," said Lacoste, as he ran along, "we can throw ourselves at once into the forest on our left. But it is confounded unlucky that we cannot reach the nearest wood, within three hundred yards—on the snow they see us too well."

The whistling was repeated from the opposite side of the road.

"This is pretty much the same as marching once in Calabria, when a band of robbers fell upon us," exclaimed Lacoste. "But these fellows are much worse. I had rather see a dozen wolves behind me, with their hungry jaws agape, than a Cossack's horse in my rear. But, come along; here's the forest. How slow we go—we seem to crawl like snails."

"You are mistaken, my friend," said Bernard; "everything is silent as death."

"It is a shame to be afraid," murmured Lacoste; "but I can't help it. Where there is nothing to be won—not even honor—but all to be lost, then indeed peril strikes cold to the heart; and one may be apt to see what only imagination pictures. Now, it is because to-day I have seen the vagabonds prowling about for their prey, like wild beasts, behind every tree and in every bush, I cannot help thinking there is, or at least may be, a ferocious peasant or plundering Cossack."

"Now, heaven be praised! we have reached the point. Let us edge away into the wood; we can always keep in the direction of the road."

Believing themselves to be safe, they slackened their pace.

"Comrade, you have a gold ring on your finger; take care that it is not too tight," continued Lacoste, after a few moments. "I can't forget that I saw the rascals in cold blood cut off our captain's finger, because the ring could not be easily drawn off. We don't know what may happen; so you had better either throw it away, or at least conceal it."

The apprehension that he might possibly lose the ring, of such mysterious interest to him, fell heavily upon Bernard's heart.

"Throw it away!" he replied; "I cannot, for it is infinitely dear to me; and where should I conceal it, that avarice may not find it?"

"That can easily be done. You have long flowing hair, where it can readily be concealed. Give it to me; I will attach it to this smooth curl, which does not hang so low as the others."

"But, is it safe?—will it not slip out?" asked the anxious owner.

"If you do not tear out the lock on which it hangs, certainly not; and I'll conceal it so deeply, that a jackdaw, taught to steal gold, could not discover it. 'Tis true the fingers of the Cossacks are — the Lord preserve us!—what is this? Do you hear nothing?"

This interruption of his remarks was sudden. His voice fell low and tremulous, and he laid his finger on his lips.

Bernard shook his head. But soon after he heard a distant murmur, as of a group of men conversing earnestly with each other.

"Here comes one—step aside!" whispered Lacoste.

Saying this, he cautiously moved into the thicket, Bernard following his example.

Scarcely were they concealed, than a troop of ten or twelve peasants, armed with pikes, came suddenly in sight. The fugitives were alarmed—their hearts beating violently. But they trusted that twilight and the brushwood would conceal them. At this moment, a dog made his way through the snow, and stopping in front of the thicket, began to bark. The peasants, hearing him, looked cautiously around them.

"Nothing remains for us now but flight, comrade—you to the left, I myself to the right!" exclaimed Lacoste. At the same moment taking a leap out of the bushes, and running as fast as his strength permitted, he plunged deeper into the woods. The dog followed his track with a loud barking; Bernard, obedient to the direction of his adroit companion, took as rapidly an opposite direction. Without looking back, he hastened through the deep snow and the thick brushwood until his breath failed him. He halted, and listened attentively as he carelessly looked about him. All was silent. He

heard no more either of dogs barking or voices of men—only the fearful rustling of the night-wind through the tops of the tall firs. Cautiously he ventured again in the direction of Smolensko, because he hoped to meet there with his companion in misfortune. He soon regained his own tracks in the snow. These he followed with great circumspection, fearing the presence of his enemies. But the forest appeared entirely desolate. His track led him, after a full quarter of an hour, to the spot from which he had fled. To his delight he discovered also Lacoste's footsteps, and he indulged the hope of again finding him. Following them up, he soon saw them, to his grief, mixed with many others—a token that the poor fellow had been pursued. For a considerable distance they penetrated the forest; then it appeared that they turned back in the former direction. Bernard was irresolute: he reflected upon the prudence of following the track out of the forest into the open road. He searched in the hope of discovering Lacoste's footsteps alone, leading from this place of confusion further into the forest. But he found nothing to justify his hopes. He began to fear that the unhappy man had fallen into the hands of his enemies. His generous heart bade him not to abandon his preserver so long as he had the power to search without seriously compromising his own safety. Thus he followed the footsteps that led to the great road—yet with great caution, and attentively listening to catch every suspicious sound. At this moment he thought he heard a stifled groan. He stopped and listened. The moaning was repeated! He was not mistaken; a living being must be near at hand. Inclining his head forward, he made in the direction of the sound. Now he heard the moaning close beside him, yet he saw nothing. The snow was trampled by many steps; a gigantic pine stood a few paces on one side. From that spot the groaning came. Bernard was going round the tree, in search of the object of his solicitude, when on a sudden he started back with an involuntary cry of horror! His eyes became riveted on an half-naked and blood-stained body, which appeared to be fastened to the trunk of the tree. Mastering his reluctance, he fearfully approached this object. He soon discovered that the miserable being was transfixed to the tree; and was no other than his preserver and companion, Lacoste.

"Father of Mercies!" he loudly exclaimed, scarce able to retain his position. "Art thou yet alive, my friend? and cannot I save thee?" The dying man slightly nodded his head in token of his recognition of Bernard, but he could not speak. With reluctance, but yielding to necessity, Bernard seized the

broken shaft of a pike, which was driven through the shoulder of the sufferer, and drew it out. But a second passed through the region of the loins, and would not at first yield to his utmost efforts; finally he succeeded in tearing out this also. This being effected, the poor wretch fell forward on his knees. Bernard caught him up in his arms and gently lowered him upon the ground, with his back leaning against the trunk of the tree. He breathed deeply only twice; his head fell forward heavily upon his breast. His sufferings were at an end!

Bernard held him yet for a while in his arms, encouraging the vain hope that the passing life might return. But all in vain. It was not regret for the loss of his friend; it was horror at the mode of losing him, that racked his feelings. Yet holding the head in his lap, he fixed his motionless eye on vacancy; no tear escaped him—he uttered neither sigh nor groan. The silence was unbroken around him; even the wind rustled no longer through the trees. Dark clouds lay heavy and portentous in the air. Two ravens alighted on the loftier branches of the pine and croaked ominously, as awaiting their prey.

"At least, you shall not mutilate this body!" exclaimed Bernard, as he arose. With such aid as his staff could render, he opened a broad furrow under the pine in the deep snow. Then he arranged the hair and clothes of the dead body. Being about to button the shirt, he felt something sharp. He discovered that the zealous soldier had fastened his most precious treasure—the cross of the legion of honor—on the inside of his shirt with a needle. "It is now thy last duty to grace the sepulchre of a soldier," he said, apostrophising the valued token; "albeit, no mortal eye may again see thee!"

He now hastened to dispose of the body in its cold resting-place, and rolled huge masses of snow over it, until they formed a considerable hillock. With the same iron that had pierced the body of the departed soldier, he affixed the ribband and cross to the tree, immediately above the grave, that it might bear honorable testimony of the termination of a soldier's career.

Bernard folded his arms in sorrow, as he stood awhile beside the grave. "Here, take thy rest now, until spring shall remove this cold shroud and call up flowers around thy mortal remains. Thou didst deserve a less perishable monument, indeed—but be content; here no man obtains a worthier! Fare thee well!"

He turned from the melancholy spot and departed, he scarce knew whither. His resolution was to exert his every energy for his

safety—but he was aware of the perils, and so prepared for the worst.

CHAPTER LXX.

As Louis, with his fellow prisoners, was being conducted through the forest, his vigilance was continually on the alert in the hope of discovering some trace of Bernard. He was in doubt whether he had more to hope or to fear. It would have been an invaluable consolation to him to share his joys and his griefs with him; but his generosity was proof against the taint of self-love. He fostered the secret, although feeble hope, that Bernard had been more fortunate in his efforts to escape, and would soon rejoin Rainski and friends.

After a walk of about one hour they came upon a clear space surrounded by woods. Here large watch-fires were blazing, around which lay groups of armed peasants. With astonishment Louis saw many women among them, whom the general hatred of the invaders had divested of their domestic habits, and inspired with contempt of exposure and fatigue. Some were preparing victuals, others cleaned weapons, and an elderly matron was seen in close attendance upon the wounded.

At first no one seemed particularly to regard this arrival. But when they perceived the prisoners that were brought in, curiosity was excited, and they collected together to gaze on the unfortunate captives. The hopelessness in their countenances contrasted painfully with the expression of scorn and wild joy of the conquerors. Louis needed all his nerve to enable him to preserve his serenity. The circumstance that he was not, as the others, stripped of his clothing, but still covered with a warm cloak, prevented him at least from trembling with cold, and was, therefore, very advantageous to him. But his garment awakened the avarice of his enemies. They crowded around him, and their sentiments were but too easily interpreted by their gesticulations, and clamor, and increasing irritation. At length a large, bearded ruffian, who might well indulge the proud design of seizing the lion's share of the plunder, approached him and endeavored to remove the cap from his head. Louis stepped back a few paces, and raised his hand as if to defend himself from the rude attack of the Russian. The savage in an instant lifted his formidable cudgel and threatened to strike him. And this he would indeed have done; but suddenly there arose a loud cry of a fe-

male voice, and at the same moment a noble form, enveloped in costly furs, and with her face veiled, broke through the circle of peasants and threw herself upon the Russian's raised arm.

The boor turned hastily round ; but when he discovered who it was that arrested the blow, his wrath was suddenly changed into the deepest submission, and he stepped back with servile reverence.

Louis was amazed at the mystery of this new rescue from impending destruction,—it was as sudden as effective. He fixed his looks upon his preserver, but he could not utter a word of thanks. She stood before him awhile unmoved, scarcely breathing—so deep was her emotion—and with difficulty remaining firm on her feet. Her hands were elevated, and folded, as in the attitude of prayer. At length she threw back her veil ; her voice was soft and tremulous, and scarcely audible, as she said,

“ Do you recognise me ?”

Had an angel of peace suddenly descended from the mercy-seat, and stood in radiance before him, Louis could not have been more struck with awe. He fell on his knees before the long-lost Bianca. He grasped her hand in both his own, and bent his head over it. His tears streamed apace—his joy was excessive.

“ Thus do I repay thee !” said she, raising her blue eyes, swimming in tears, to heaven. “ Oh, Almighty Father ! thy hand directed my steps !”

The people who stood around contemplated the group in grave astonishment.

“ What is the matter here ?” suddenly asked a rough, manly voice. Louis awoke at once from his blissful trance and rose to his feet. A horseman galloped into the circle ; his noble steed and commanding person denoted a man of rank.

It was Count Dolgorow.

“ Oh, my father !” exclaimed Bianca in a passionate tone, “ behold here our preserver !”

“ How ? who ?” asked the Count, casting his eager eye upon Louis. But suddenly he cut short his surprise by exclaiming : “ Thou here, miserable villain !” And at a leap he descended from his horse, rushed among the mass of the prisoners, and dragged Beaucaire from among them, trembling with cold and dismay.

Dolgorow, whom revenge aroused more readily than gratitude, had grounds for this sudden display of his character. In England and Italy, where Dolgorow was entrusted with important affairs, Beaucaire had been his secretary and secret agent. When the war of the year 1812 broke out, and Napoleon ordered the Russian and English agents in all

countries to be rigidly sought after and apprehended, Dolgorow's operations were detected. He was obliged to fly hastily and in disguise out of Rome. Beaucaire obtained a passport as a German count, Wallersheim. Feodorowna assumed the name of Bianca, and represented herself as his sister. Dolgorow himself was described as an old servant ; his wife as the governess of the young Countess. Thus they commenced their perilous journey. In Milan, Beaucaire, who had conceived a coarse passion for the Count's daughter, believed he enjoyed a favorable opportunity for accomplishing his object. He ventured to make proposals, which Feodorowna scornfully rejected, and which inflamed her father's wrath, notwithstanding the extreme peril of his position. He inflicted chastisement upon the knave, and dismissed him with ignominy. Beaucaire lost not a moment in betraying him. But the Count had anticipated the traitor ; he was prepared to fly speedily, and changed his route by keeping, instead of through Verona to Innspruck, the road over the Simplon. There Louis had met with them. The *Preserver* and the *Traitor* had now at the same time alike fallen into his hands. The hour of re-payment had come.

“ Holy Father ! How strange a fate !” exclaimed Feodorowna, when her eye fell upon the miserable wretch, whom Dolgorow, in spite of his struggling, tore from out the trembling mass.

Beaucaire saw her now also, and in an agony of despair, tearing himself loose, he fell down at her feet. Convulsively he clasped her knees, exclaiming : “ Have pity on me, Countess ; intercede for me ! My love for you—and that alone, has been my ruin !”

Bianca was indeed moved with compassion for the trembling wretch, and raised an imploring look towards her father. But his wrath was inexorable.

“ Seize him, and cast him into the flames, that every Russian may see how a traitor is punished !” he roared.

Bianca was petrified with terror. Beaucaire, in the agony of his desperation, clung the more tenaciously to her feet, endeavoring to conceal his head in her lap. She would have fallen, had not Louis hastily advanced to her assistance and sustained her.

“ Do your duty !” shouted the enraged nobleman. “ Tear him away from the Princess !”

Upon this two men readily sprang out from the crowd, and seized the doomed man by his hair ; two others seized his feet, and a Cossack, unsheathing his knife, drew its keen edge deep across his hands, which would retain their hold of Bianca's dress.

No sooner was the wound inflicted than the hands relaxed their grasp. Amid insults and execrations of the bloodthirsty peasants, he was forcibly dragged to his doom. His cries and his prayers were alike unheeded; his torment was enjoyed by his savage executioners; and the mob, ever ready to encourage and participate in deeds of violence, followed their despairing victim.

"Watch the other prisoners!" said Dolgorow, and hastily strode through the people, who respectfully gave way, towards the place where his terrible sentence was to be executed. Bianca had reclined her head upon Louis' shoulder. A strange mixture of horror and delight filled his soul. A sudden shout rose high in the air. Involuntarily he directed his eye to the dreadful spot. He saw Beaucaire raised above the heads of the mob—his face distorted as in the agony of unutterable torments. In vain were his bloody arms thrown in frantic energy around. His savage tormentors cast him headlong into the glowing fire. A fearful cry arose over the deep murmuring of the spectators. It entered deep into Bianca's heart; she shrank aghast from the consciousness of the wretch's sufferings. She hid her face on Louis' breast. He also stood motionless and speechless with unimaginable terror. He was scarce able to turn away his eyes from the fearful spectacle, and not much less was he affected when they rested on the pale features of Bianca.

The tumult around the fire subsided, and was succeeded by a fearful silence. Bianca recoiled from the sight of the theatre of that terrible tragedy. She looked upward, and her eyes rested upon the noble features of Louis, made more definable by the emotion therein depicted. Here her feelings were more intensely centered. Her life indeed did not betray the secret of her heart, which then perhaps for the first time she had truly discovered—but it was too plainly revealed in the beaming eye. Louis devoutly believed in the mysterious ordinations of Providence, and in Bianca, at this moment, he saw only his destined companion for life. He could not but recognise that marvellous interposition whereby they now met once more. He presumed to interpret her look as auspicious evidence; and he would have addressed her, had not Dolgorow at that moment returned from witnessing his judicial sentence, and interposed his authority. He bent a searching look upon his daughter, as if it appeared to him that her too obvious agitation might have its origin in something more nearly and deeply interesting to herself than the fearful punishment of Beaucaire.

"Princess Ochalskoi," (and he spoke haughtily and coldly,) "I have not forgotten

the circumstances under which we contracted our obligations to this young man. But perhaps our account is at last balanced, since I see him here, an enemy of Russia, and among the invaders who have dared to violate the soil of our country. But a Russian is generous. It shall be my duty, young man, to see you safely restored to your own people. But should you fall a second time into my hands, the fate of all other captives will be yours;—death, or perpetual captivity in the mines of Siberia."

Louis' pride was awakened by the haughty demeanor of Dolgorow; but suppressing it, he replied: "If you send me back to the French army, my death is certain, and you yourself will be its cause."

"How is this?" demanded Dolgorow, with interest.

"What I did for you on the Italian frontier was in my own country adjudged by the French authorities a crime meriting death. I was proscribed; deprived of all power of making my escape by flight; the only remaining alternative was accepting the aid of a noble friend, and entering the army. This very morning I was about to suffer death, pursued and betrayed by the miserable being who has even now undergone the dreadful punishment of his crime. A sudden attack by your people saved me. But a dear friend—"

Dolgorow interrupted him: "If you speak the truth, you are justified, and I believe you. In this case you will take care, Princess, that our preserver be carried to the castle. Solanow is to guide you. My duties will for the present keep me here, but I shall join you as soon as possible. But go now and apprise the Countess of our situation."

Bianca obeyed, and accompanied by two servants, took her way to a kind of a hut, erected behind the camp-fires.

"We shall soon meet again," he said, approaching Louis, and bowing politely. Her look pierced him to the heart; she smiled sadly and hopefully, while a lofty benignity, as in the countenance of a saint, beamed on her features. With respect he bowed his head; in raising it again he saw the noble form, as a vision from on high, passing through the ranks of the peasants, who reverentially did obeisance, as in duty bound, to their chieftain's daughter.

Dolgorow would have departed, but Louis detained him.

"I must yet further intreat your kind offices for a friend, who has perhaps, as I have, fallen into the hands of your people. He has been my preserver, and has thus brought upon himself the wrath of the French authorities; he was to have been shot with me this morning, but was, with me, saved by your

people. He escaped the French soldiers, but may have fallen a captive to the Cossacks."

"If he does fall into our hands, he shall be brought to you," said Dolgorow; "but by what name is he known?"

"Count Lomond is the name under which he entered the service, and which he also now will continue to use."

"I shall make the necessary arrangements on his account."

A greyheaded soldier of about sixty, wearing the uniform and beard of a Russian, but resembling a German in features, approached Dolgorow, and bowing respectfully, made some request.

"Be it so," replied Dolgorow; "if you believe you have found a countryman, Solanow, speak to him."

"My dear sir," said the old man, in the German language, to Louis, "permit me to ask you a question. I think I can trace in you a resemblance to one before known to me. Is your name Steinfels?"

"What?" exclaimed Louis, betraying extreme astonishment, as he recognised the name as the same with that used in Mary's letter. "Why do you ask?" he stammered forth.

"I served a German master of that name," said the old soldier, "it is true he is long since dead, but when I see before me his image, like—"

"When and where did he die?" exclaimed Louis, hastily interrupting the old man.

"The sea has swallowed him. We were once imprisoned at Paris, but we made our escape to Havre, and got on board a Dutch vessel."

"When was that?" asked Louis, in breathless suspense.

"Eighteen years ago."

"Because of a duel?"

"Yes."

"That was my father!" exclaimed Louis wholly overwhelmed. He seized the hands of the soldier, who stood before him trembling and irresolute. "And who art thou?"

"A simple man, dear sir," replied the old man, as the tears rolled down his cheeks; "I was only his groom—Willhofen is my true name."

"Honest, faithful servant!" exclaimed Louis, "and here I find thee? And my father is really dead?"

"Doubtless long ago! We were shipwrecked in the North Sea; the sea swallowed most of us. A few, I myself among them, were saved; the captain of a Russian vessel picked us up."

Here the old man hesitated, signifying by a side glance that he was not allowed to speak more. But Louis guessed the fate of the unfortunate captives.

Dolgorow had in the meantime repaired to the other prisoners, to examine them. They stood trembling before him; most of them were young soldiers.

"Are there any Germans among you?" asked he loudly.

Louis heard the question and listened; he waited for the answer, feeling it to be his duty to endeavor to effect the liberation of his countrymen. But no answer was given.

Count Dolgorow arrested the attention of the soldier Willhofen.

The prisoners now delivered over to your charge are to be conveyed to the castle, and probably yet further. They are serviceable. For the others we have neither place nor food—an ounce of lead will remove all difficulties."

There were twenty-one captives doomed to slavery. Only one was set aside as too old for work. This was St. Luces.

Not having understood the Count's words, St. Luces fancied that from his appearance and fine linen, and from his clothes (of which, however, he was by this time pretty well stripped,) his captors had discovered him to belong to the higher classes. The pallid horror which had spread over his features since the terrible fate of Beaucaire, was replaced by a faint gleam of hope. He ventured to address the Count in French.

"I trust, sir," he said, "I shall be treated in conformity with those laws of war which all civilised nations respect. I am not a military man, but belong to the civil service; my rank—"

"You are a Frenchman," sternly interrupted Dolgorow—"one of those vampires who have sucked the blood and marrow out of half the nations of Europe; more contemptible and odious than the soldier, for he, at least, fights with fair and open weapons."

"They would willingly," persisted St. Luces, again trembling with apprehension, "exchange me against Russian prisoners!"

"Prisoners! what prisoners have you?" cried Dolgorow, with bitter scorn. "Thousands, certainly, are set down in your bulletins, but where can you show them? You do wrong to remind me of that. Think you we know not how your ruthless assassin bands have treated the few who fell into their hands? Think you we have not found them lying with shattered skulls upon the roads in rear of your flying columns? Did we not meet with them shut up in churches, barns, and stables, dead in the pangs of famine? Away with ye! We shall find enough to exchange, when exchange we will."*

* "Upon the evening of this long day's march, the imperial column approaching Gjatz was surprised to find upon the road the bodies of Russians quite recently

In the meantime, Solanow, or Willhofen, had well scrutinized the features of the trembling unfortunate. He whispered a few Russian words to Dolgorow, and then addressed the prisoner :

" What is your name, sir ? "

" I am the Baron Rumigny de St. Lices."

" Rumigny ! " exclaimed Willhofen, his features assuming an expression of sudden indignation. " Father of Heaven ! Thy vengeance does not slumber ! " he exclaimed, elevating his hands towards heaven : " Villain that thou art, dost thou know me ? Hast thou forgotten that thou—but hold—here—look here ? Knowest thou this man ? "

He hastened forthwith to Louis, and drew him hastily towards Rumigny, saying :

" Steinfels is his name ! The dead arise to avenge themselves ! This is the murderer of your father, the murderer of the excellent Waldheim—and lo ! the hour of retribution is at hand."

The eyes of the despairing wretch were fixed upon Louis, and he strove to speak, but language failed him. Louis was moved with the deepest awe at this partial solution of a great mystery. For a moment his anger fiercely boiled within him—but his more generous nature soon regained its ascendancy. It was only pity that filled his breast, when he contemplated the wretch, tortured by the expectation of death and by remorse, and broken down under the weight of his guilt.

" Willhofen," said Louis, addressing the old soldier ; " Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord ! Let, therefore, the Almighty accomplish his own work. It is our duty to forgive."

A tear stood in the eye of the veteran but he remained silent.

slain, all with their heads cloven in the same manner, and with their brains scattered around. It was known that two thousand prisoners preceded the column, escorted by Spaniards, Portuguese and Poles. Various opinions were emitted ; some were indignant, others approved or remained indifferent, according to the character of each. Around the Emperor these different impressions found no voice, until Caulaincourt burst out and exclaimed, " that it was an atrocious cruelty. This, then, is the civilization we bring to Russia ! What effect would this barbarity have upon the enemy ? Did we not leave him our wounded and a host of prisoners ? Would he lack the opportunity of horrible reprisals ? Napoleon maintained a gloomy silence, but upon the morrow these murders had ceased. The unfortunate prisoners were allowed to die of hunger. In the enclosures into which, at night, they were huddled like cattle. Doubtless it was still a barbarity ; but what could be done ? Exchange them ? The enemy refused. Set them free ? They would have hastened to proclaim our destination, and soon they would have returned with their companions to harass our march. In this unsparring war to have given them life would have been to sacrifice ourselves. We were cruel from necessity. The fault was, to have ever placed ourselves in so terrible an alternative.

" On the other hand, during our march into the interior of Russia, our captive soldiers were not treated more humanely, although the Russians had not impious necessity for an excuse ! "— Segur.

Louis would have made some intercession with Dolgorow, but with a stern rebuke the Count cut short his prayer.

" Here the law must take its course ! " he said firmly. " If the prisoner has at any time done you a wrong, your forgiveness may benefit him hereafter, but here it can be of no service to him."

He nodded to a Cossack near him and uttered a few Russian words. The wretched prisoner whose frame now appeared to be utterly paralysed, was instantly conveyed away.

A brief pause ensued—then was heard a sharp volley, announcing the termination of a guilty career, which Louis did not desire, but could not lament.

CHAPTER LXXI.

DOLGOROW mounted his charger, and collecting all his men capable of bearing arms, put himself at their head and set out in the direction of the main road. Willhofen and four peasants with spears remained on guard over the prisoners, who were allowed to warm themselves by the great fire. An allowance of bread and brandy was distributed among them. Louis' hopes were bent on again seeing Bianca. He therefore asked Willhofen what would be their next step.

" We must await here the commands of the Princess, who is yonder with the sick Countess in the hut," answered he. " She is probably expecting the return of the sledge which has carried some wounded men to the village."

The designation of " Princess " had already before this affected Louis painfully. He asked : " Is the Princess then not the daughter of the Count ? "

" Certainly," replied Willhofen, " but married the Prince Ochalskoi."

" Married ! " exclaimed Louis, and he grew pale.

" And better for having been so," continued Willhofen, " for the Prince is dead. I believe, between ourselves, it was but half a marriage after all. For on that very evening, the castle was surprised by the French ; and in the attack the Prince received a mortal wound of which he died at Moscow."

Louis' attention was intensely arrested.

" Here on this spot in the forest I was obliged to conceal him for a short time, until we obtained a wagon to convey him and his young bride to his hunting chateau."

" Here ? — here ? " said Louis, interrupting the narrative.

"Just here; for the castle is situated at no great distance; the high trees alone intercept the view of it: There, yonder——"

"When was the attack made by the French?"

"On the seventeenth of August; I remember it as if it were but yesterday."

"Merciful Father!" exclaimed Louis, throwing himself upon his knees in a paroxysm of excitement; "Great Disposer of human events! who will murmur against Thee! Accept my warmest, purest thanks! Prove me, Father, even with Thy chastening rod, prove me, and I shall not relinquish my hope and trust in Thee! Despair shall not enter into my thoughts, for wonderfully hast Thou hitherto watched over me and guided me! Thou wilt accomplish all things in Thy wisdom and to Thy eternal Glory!"

Willhofen witnessed the fervency of this prayer with astonishment. He supposed it to originate in some secret desire connected with his present situation—but he dared not attempt to penetrate the mystery.

When Louis arose and paced to and fro with much animation, Willhofen approached him and seized his hand.

"Piety is a treasure of great price, dear sir," he said, "and I trust your prayer may be heard. I have myself often prayed fervently to the Lord, and I hope he will hear me also. Has he not already brought me back from the distant region of Asia, where I was lost as a serf of Prince Ochalskoi, to the neighborhood of my own country, and to the presence of the son of my old master? And now your interest with the Count is such, that I trust your prayer may prevail on him to grant me my liberty. Will you not intercede?"

"Certainly!" said Louis, and pledged his hand on the promise. "But what did you say? a serf to the Prince?"

"Yes, truly; but his possessions have now, by the contract of marriage, fallen to the Count. Ah, if it depended on the Princess, to give me my liberty, then would I have procured it long since. To the Count Dolgorow I have not yet presumed to offer my petition."

A servant approached and spoke to Willhofen.

"The Countess Dolgorow requires your immediate attendance," said Willhofen. "Follow this man, he will guide you."

Louis followed the servant, not without solicitude. They walked over to a hut, hastily constructed of pine branches. Bianca came out to meet him; she was friendly, but melancholy could be traced on her features.

"I shall lead you to my mother," said she in an under-tone: "You have already made her acquaintance upon our flight out of Italy. Do not be offended by the perhaps too cold and formal reception you may meet with. In this country the freedom of social intercourse,

unlike Germany, is but little known; here rank takes precedence over all, and the national pride and hatred against strangers are at this moment both so powerfully aroused, that scarce even the warm instincts of gratitude can rise superior to their claims."

"Gratitude?" replied Louis. "Who ought to be grateful here? You, to whom I scarcely rendered a service, and if so, in itself the most auspicious incident of my life; or I, that owe you all—all!"

"You appear to desire to balance our account by assuming a reciprocity of services," said the Princess. "You refer probably to your escape from the fate of perishing, as those two unhappy wretches have perished?"

"Should I also," answered Louis after some hesitation, "be unmindful of the warning I received at Moscow?"

"So you have recognised me by my token?" said Feodorowna, with an indescribable grace.

"Could I ever forget?" replied he, and audaciously.

A slight blush overspread the pale features of the lady. Allowing the lashes of her eyes almost to close: she said softly,

"And I also cannot forget the few hours of happiness we once passed together. Oh! why did you leave us so soon—so abruptly?"

"Do you imagine it to have been my choice?" exclaimed Louis. "Oh, no! do me not that injustice!—an evil genius parted us. He led my steps astray. Too late I must have reached the banks of the Rhone."

"My father urged us on with haste," said Feodorowna. "I endeavored by some token—"

"Oh, I found it," said Louis, interrupting her, and at the same instant he tenderly but cautiously raised her hand to his lips. "Yet it was after a long night of hopeless anxiety and watchfulness that the morning star of hope once more arose before my sight. I shall never forget the moment when I saw this ribbon, blooming as a rose among the branches. Even to this very hour I bear it next my heart. Here it is!"

A tear of joy filled the eye of the lady, as she recognised the token of her wanderings in the hands of her lover.

"We retired immediately beyond the river, and entered a perilous road through the mountains."

The Princess endeavored in vain to control her too apparent emotion.

"And I thought myself on the same path, as I pursued my way up the valley and over the Gothard. I was continually searching for some trace of you, until in Germany that inauspicious paper——"

"Did then my last farewell find you after all?" said Feodorowna, not without a smile of internal satisfaction.

"It was indeed the bitterest cup ever presented to my lips by the hand of adversity."

"Yet has Providence blessed it—we must be grateful," replied Feodorowna, religiously acknowledging the Divine mercy. "I could not then have believed that we should again meet, but now we must recognise the overruling power that directs the varied course of our lives!"

"Truly, a wonderful power!" exclaimed Louis, in a transport of gratitude. "Oh! if you had but known how near I have been to you in the meantime!"

Bianca looked surprised.

"At Moscow, do you mean?"

"No, not far from hence. I was at the storming of that castle."

"You, yourself!" exclaimed she, looking at him with an expression of doubt. She raised her eyes and hands towards heaven, and poured out the intensity of her feelings.

"Almighty Father in Heaven!—how could I for a moment doubt thy grace! Oh! you do not know," she continued, turning to Louis, "you cannot guess from what an unhappy fate that irruption redeemed me!—But," she added, hastily and cautiously, "for heaven's sake, keep your own secret; let it not be known to any living being that you were present on that fatal night;—there is one who would never forgive it."

Thus speaking, they entered the hut. Upon a couch Louis saw the Countess Dolgorow, whose features, although sickness and sorrow had somewhat disfigured them, he recognised instantly.

She looked upon him with far less of kindness than patrician condescension.

"I am glad," she said, in grave and measured language, "that we find an opportunity of recompensing the service you rendered us in Italy; although I am sorry to find you amongst those who have brought the horrors of war into our country."

"On that point, may it please your ladyship," said Louis, proudly, "I believe I have already sufficiently justified myself."

"You may now enjoy the opportunity of compensating your compulsory error. God has conquered the armies of the enemy—ruin is bursting over them—the just cause prevails. It depends now on yourself alone to partake in the victory."

Louis was silent for some moments. His answer was tranquil and resolute.

"You will allow me, Countess, to attempt the justification of my resolution. I myself believe the cause of Russia to be just. It was only with reluctance I took part in the conflict against her. I have done nothing more than the honor of a man and of a soldier, who has made his choice of a profession, re-

quired. As an individual, I could neither resist nor direct the course of martial events. This acquits me of all personal responsibility to this country. Perhaps nobody in the whole army wished the war; therefore, should no single soldier be required to represent the general wrong. He could not avert, and should not be made to atone for the evil. To the noble leader, under whose protection I had put myself—to my dear companions in arms, my sentiments were not unknown: but honoring them, they so spared me in this delicate matter, that they sought to exempt me from every duty which might be peculiarly painful to my feelings. I myself had to strive against the indulgence, to avoid dishonorable suspicion of my honor, and my courage as a soldier. Whatever friendship—whatever brotherly love—whatever esteem and benevolence could suggest, was cheerfully accorded to me by my companions in arms. I am sure, that under such circumstances, you will not require that I should treacherously betray my friends, or take up arms against them. If, indeed, a paramount duty to my country should demand it, I should certainly obey:—yet, even in that case, I should act with more reluctance and dissatisfaction than heretofore, against Russia. For, whatever may be the want of sympathy between great masses of men, yet the feelings of individuals are always more or less affected and involved: and I would rather draw my sword to my own certain destruction, than against my noble and dear friends, with whom I have shared the perils and fortunes of the war."

The Countess seemed to be sensible to Louis' independent reply. In Feodorowna's eye there beamed a secret joy and emotion, on account of the lofty sentiment of him to whom her heart was already disposed to commend its every hope of happiness and prosperity.

"The cause of Russia is that of your own country—it is that of all Europe," replied the countess, after some reflection; "but I feel myself too weak to explain to you now. You will accompany us to the hunting-chateau, some distance off: it is situated so deeply in the forest, that it is secure against every hostile surprise. However, we cannot move from this place before evening, because our sledge is conveying some of the more severely wounded to a village far distant from here. In the meantime, our people are desired to provide you with everything you may require."

Saying this, she inclined her head, as if signifying to Louis that he might withdraw; but Feodorowna, visibly perplexed by the cold, haughty tone of the Countess, interposed her mediation.

"This duty I shall take upon myself, dear-

est mother; the preserver of our lives must not find us ungrateful!"

"I hope he will become duly acquainted with Russian magnanimity, and learn how to appreciate it," answered the Countess, proudly and repulsively; "but I would pray thee, my daughter, not to leave me too long; as thou knowest that I necessarily want thy assistance in my present condition."

Louis bowed and departed; but Feodorowna followed him instantly.

"I entreat of you to do nothing that is likely to attract undue attention," said Louis, gently, to her, when they were in the open air. "The most brilliant prospects are now before me—what more can I desire?"

"Oh! you are so ready with charitable suggestions!" replied Feodorowna; "but I myself must, in some degree, excuse my mother. She is truly devoted to her country; and this is the reason why you find us now in this singular situation. She would, by all means—and in this she has not alone followed the will of my father—arouse and inflame the courage and zeal of the people by her presence, by exhortation, by aid to the unfortunate, and by that active influence which is readily exacted by those occupying a lofty position in society, when they desire to sway the feelings of those below them. This duty she has practised with such energy, surpassing that of ordinary women, that she now lies fainting and exhausted, and is compelled to retire to that forest chateau, whither we are now about to proceed."

This discourse was here interrupted by the old man who had saved Louis from the vengeance of the angry multitude when, some few hours before, he was bound to the stake, in expectation of immediate death. The old man now advanced from the forest. It was Father Gregorius.

"I salute thee, my daughter," he said, addressing Feodorowna, in the Russian language. "Hast thou pity upon this unfortunate prisoner?"

"To this venerable old man," exclaimed Louis, recognising him, and seizing his hand with a warm expression of gratitude, "I owe first my life, and the greatest blessing that has been bestowed upon it."

"So indeed, Father Gregorius, thou hast saved him for my sake!" exclaimed the young lady, with touching emotion; "and he was once the preserver of my father, of my mother, and of myself. Ah! he has been twice my preserver. You have indeed protected him for me!"

"Dear daughter!" replied the kind-hearted old man, "the commandment of the Lord required his salvation. He was helpless, faint, bound; our enemies were also his enemies; and thus he belonged to us. May he now

become entirely one of us, and draw his sword against the invaders, who are already blasted by the bolt of Divine vengeance!"

Louis was silent, for he understood not the words, spoken in Russian; but Feodorowna replied without hesitation:

"No, my Father; this we must not ask at his hands. How heavily soever his comrades may have sinned against him, he must not execute vengeance on them;—he must not become a traitor to those who speak his own mother tongue, and who dwell in the same country with him. Russia's holy cause may well be left to her own children. They are strong enough to work out their own vengeance and retribution. It ought to be their glory and their jealous pride to suffer no stranger to partake in the work which they themselves are able to accomplish. Therefore, my Father, let us honor the feelings of this our guest, for his own people. His well-being is of deep interest to me. To thy care I commend him as a guest;—thou wilt do the duty of a father to him, until I send to thee. Divide thy meal and thy couch with him; for, as thou seest, he is exhausted with fatigue and anxiety. To thee I transfer him; and it is well that thou shouldst know that thy daughter accounts him as a dear brother; to thee, therefore, let him be a dear son!"

Feodorowna spoke with a warm zeal. Gregorius held out his right hand to his guest, in token of a kind and fatherly reception of him.

"*Salve! Sis felix, quomodo mihi es expatus!*"

Louis had not hitherto been aware that he stood in the presence of a servant of the Lord. He was not a little rejoiced at discovering the means of intelligible communication, and he promptly replied:

"*Salve, mi Pat'r! Ex animo gratias tibi ago, salvatori vita mea! Sis felix quomodo benigimus es.*"

Feodorowna took leave of Louis and went back to her mother. He himself followed the venerable priest, who led him to a second hut, before which there blazed a large fire. With unfeigned thanks he accepted the meal which the old man offered to him. While he consumed the simple but nourishing food, Willhofen also arrived, and, at the benevolent invitation of the old man, sat down beside them. This afforded Louis the first opportunity of inquiring after his father, and responding to the inquiries of Willhofen after his mother. It was a melancholy truth, indeed, that both were under the necessity of speaking of the departed; but the tender reminiscences called up by their conversation, were tinged with something of pleasure, as well as pain.

Only one care—one grief—lay upon Louis

breast—Bernard's fate. 'Tis true, the unsubdued energy of hope was yet awake; yet the very scenes he had but lately witnessed were sufficient to excite the most gloomy apprehensions.

CHAPTER LXXII.

It was almost night before Lonis again heard anything about Feodorowna. Although he was well pleased to find himself in the society of the worthy clergyman who had furnished him with warm furs—although he heard many interesting particulars from Willhofen, which deeply moved his feelings; yet his heart beat with restless anxiety for the object of his thoughts, and he feared every moment some accident might deprive him of the expected reunion.

At length a message was delivered from her, desiring him to prepare for departure. Gregorius and Willhofen accompanied him to the hut, where stood the sledge, to which the horses were already attached. The two ladies soon came forth, closely enveloped in furs and veils. The Countess was carried; she was evidently much fatigued. Passing by Louis, she saluted him with a slight inclination of her head; Feodorowna, on the contrary, stretching out her hand to her friend, said:

"In a few hours we shall have reached the place of rest; you will, I hope, rejoice at it. You must pardon us, that our sledge has no suitable place for you."

Louis soon discovered what it was that offended Feodorowna's delicacy—namely, that he must sit upon a servant's seat. He kindly and respectfully quieted her regrets, as he assisted her into the carriage.

"My eyes will watch for you, and my hand shall guard you, during the darkness of the night; it is a charge that renders me happy."

Saying this, he swung himself up into the fore-seat, where Willhofen took his place by his side. The coachman sat upon the back-seat, handing the reins to Willhofen; two servants, on horseback, rode on before.

After having taken leave of the ladies, Gregorius held out his hand to his young guest, for whom he speedily had conceived a sincere affection. Louis pressed it with the warmest gratitude. The sleigh was soon in motion, and dashed away with rapidity.

Their way lay through the midst of a dense forest. It was dark indeed, and the sky was dull and gloomy; still they were enabled to trace their path on the snow. Silence reigned

everywhere. The hollow rustling among the pine branches, occasioned by the passage of the sleigh and the hard breathing of the horses, were the only sounds that disturbed the frozen solitude.

Lonis had now leisure to reflect upon the vicissitudes he had but so recently experienced. A lifetime of events in the short space of one day! His powers of endurance assailed on every side, were sustained in equilibrium by the very incidents that environed them. To any one of the several trials both the mind and the body might well have given way. He now enjoyed a few moments of comparative tranquillity, and was enabled to arrange the confused images that vexed his thoughts, and pass them in review before him. The present and the past—the remote and the proximate—were now subject to his apprehensions; grief and joy, care and hope, trod closely upon each other! His own fate was as the image of an autumnal landscape—where the shadow of a passing cloud is clearly defined in the sunshine—where the green and the withered leaves are strangely intermixed with each other.

"The lost is found, and beside thee!" he mentally soliloquised; "the breath of her lips is thine own; thy hand can touch her! But canst thou ever clasp her to thy heart? Will not the brazen portal of fate again grate its harsh thunder before the opening Paradise?—and will thou not be excluded in the chill darkness of despair? And thy friend, too!—the faithful—the invaluable friend!—Alas!—the terrible calamity, so graciously averted from this unworthy head, has fallen but too fatally on his! or death has visited him in all the terrors of winter and wilderness! And has he thus passed away from the glad precincts of light and life? Ah! how fearful to think that no hand to aid—no voice to comfort—to love—to soothe—ministered to the wants, the regrets and the affections of the dying sufferer! Oh, Almighty Father! chastise not too severely him whom Thou deignest to bless! Alas! this is indeed an affliction scarce compensated by the love of woman. No, no! It cannot be, that I purchase happiness at such a price! Weighed down with grief for one so ruthlessly lost—the hand is unable to raise this new cup to my lips."

"It is getting quite dark!" said Willhofen. "These forests are fearfully wild. Haik! Do you hear the wolf? He howls with hunger. If he scents us in the wind he will soon be on our track. Holla! my lad—you there before. Ride close up with us. Are your guns loaded? We may have to use them."

Louis looked back with anxiety upon the women. But the night and the thick veils they wore, rendered it impossible to recog-

nise their features, or distinguish whether or not they were under any apprehension.

"Is there any danger?" he quietly asked Willhofen.

"Not much. Be under no alarm!"

"I am not anxious for my own sake," answered Louis; "but we have women with us."

"That's nothing. We have three guns, and to you I resign my cutlass. Hark! There must be a whole pack; hear how they howl!"

They proceeded but slowly through the deep, untrodden snow. The air was at rest, and the deep and constant howling of the hungry brutes was distinctly heard in the distance.

"The horses already scent their enemy," said Willhofen in an under tone; "do but see how instinctively they turn their ears to the sound and snort. Paulowitch and Stepanow!" he exclaimed to the horsemen; "make use of your spurs, and hurry on with all speed to the corner near the great pine. There the road breaks off far to the right, and perhaps we may escape detection by the beasts."

He snapped his whip and urged on the horses. Shortly the road turned round a lofty old pine, whose trunk formed the angle of the wood. The horsemen, in the act of turning the corner, suddenly reined in their animals.

"What's there?" asked Willhofen.

"Here lies a man in the way!" replied the horseman.

"So it is!" exclaimed Willhofen.

"Dead or living? Hallo! Answer!"

"He does not move; it must be a corpse. We must remove him from the road, or the sleigh will not be able to pass."

He stopped and would have given the reins to Louis—but the latter exclaimed:

"I will help you. We must see if he is really dead."

The driver taking the reins, Louis and Willhofen descended for the purpose of removing the obstruction out of the way.

"Father of Mercies! it is Bernard!" exclaimed Louis, having bent himself down, as if about to raise the body. "Bernard, art thou yet living? If there be but one spark of life in thee, I entreat thee, give me answer!"

He knelt weeping, close by the frozen sufferer—raised his head—pressed it against his breast, and endeavored in his embrace to warm the cold and pale countenance of his friend.

"What's the matter?" the Countess now called out impatiently.

Feodorowna had heard the exclamation of Louis, and in an instant sprang out of the low sleigh.

"Do you find your unhappy friend here?" she asked in a trembling voice, as she witnessed Louis' anxiety.

"A friend! Oh, the only one—now frozen—perchance dead! Oh, Bernard! hear me!"

"Perhaps there is yet hope!" said the tender-hearted lady: "we will try what can be done for him."

Saying this, she approached and laid her hand upon the breast of the stranger.

"Methinks he breathes yet," she said joyfully.

"No, no! he is dead—he is lost!" exclaimed Louis, almost distracted. "This blow is more than I can bear!"

In the agony of his distress he pressed the cold form of his friend to his heart.

"We will take the unfortunate man into the sleigh," said Feodorowna in a tone of the softest pity; "his powers may return if we cover him up warm. In an hour we shall reach the castle, and then no means shall be left untried to awaken him to life."

Louis made no answer, save only by seizing Feodorowna's hand and pressing it to his lips. She drew it softly back; her heart prayed to the bountiful Father of Heaven, that he would avert this affliction from her lover. Willhofen and Louis raised the motionless body. When they brought him to the sleigh, the Countess Dolgorow exclaimed:

"My God, what means this? What have we to do with this dead body?"

"Oh, my mother!" said Feodorowna, "it is an unhappy being in whom there is yet life. Perhaps we may yet save him."

"It is impossible!" replied the Countess, vehemently; "hearest thou not the wolves? We are in danger—we must not now overburden the sleigh; and besides, there is no room—in one word, I cannot suffer it. Make haste and come in, I command you!"

Willhofen stood irresolute. But Louis threw himself down at Feodorowna's feet, exclaiming: "By all that is sacred, I entreat you, save my friend. Take my life, but save him!"

"Mother!" exclaimed Feodorowna urgently, "humanity, the commandment of—love—"

"Fool!—for dragging along a dead body, we living are to become the prey of the wolves! No, I say, no; I command you to hasten to reseat yourself instantly."

"So, then, I will remain here," exclaimed Louis, unable to restrain his feelings. Again he clasped the cold form of his friend and covered it with his fur cloak. "Dear Bernard, thou most faithful of friends, here shalt thou again awaken to life on my bosom, or here will I die with thee!" His tears choked further utterance.

The Countess vehemently repeated her orders. "Further delay will cost us our lives. Solanow—reseat yourself and hurry

forward—obey my orders. Let him remain who will!"

"Mother, mother!" exclaimed Feodorowna, seizing her hand, "the life of a man is at a stake—the life of our preserver—"

"And who now desires to become our destroyer," interrupted the Countess. "Come in, or I leave you here also!"

The howling of the wolves distinctly indicated their approach. The servants durst neither obey nor disobey. Feodorowna stood in terrible conflict with herself. "Well, then," she said, after a powerful struggle with her feelings, "thus must I myself decide. If I must add to my misery the powerful name of Princess Ochalskoi, for once at least it shall stand me in good stead. To me belong these horses, these serfs; you know your Princess, your mistress! Upon your life, I now command you not to leave this helpless being behind you!"

She stood upright in commanding majesty before her people. The Countess in wrath and astonishment closed her lips.

"Hasten! save yourself and your friend with us!" said Feodorowna quietly to the half-paralysed Louis.

Willhofen ran to aid Louis in lifting Bernard upon the seat, where Louis covered him with his own fur, and clasped him firmly in his arms.

"I will stand here upon the pole," said the ready-witted servant; "so there will be room enough for all three of us." Securing himself with all haste in his new position, he seized the reins, crying, "Now forward, lads!"

The horses, too well aware of the near approach of the wolves, were impatiently pawing the snow beneath their feet, and snorting with increased vehemence. They gave evident signs that they felt their own safety at stake, and once at liberty they dashed rapidly and gallantly through the underwood.

The sleigh was crashing through the brushwood, when suddenly a large and powerful wolf darted out of the thicket, and made a fearful spring at the horses. But the adroit Willhofen stretched the beast upon the ground at the very moment, it would have fastened its fangs in the throat of the leader.

"So much for this fellow—and he is fortunate we do not rob him of his fur," said the merry-hearted Willhofen, without particularly regarding the loud exclamation of the Countess.

Some minutes passed without the appearance of any new enemy. The harsh echoes of the howling seemed to recede.

"They have become shy," said Willhofen turning to Louis, who, yet holding his friend

to his bosom, had scarcely remarked what had happened. "Be at ease, most gracious ladies," he continued, addressing the occupants of the sleigh; "the brute will give us no further trouble. In five minutes we shall be out of the forest, and then the path is smooth as a mirror. Once there, and not even a meteor can overtake us."

The darkness of the forest was relieved: they had arrived at a place covered only by low bushes; it might be traversed in about a quarter of an hour. The sleigh flew rapidly along a route well hardened by more frequent use. It soon turned into a straight alley or artificial road; and in a few minutes the castle lay before the eyes of the travellers.

"Thus far all well!" exclaimed Willhofen, as he drew up before the door, out of which two aged servants were advancing with lanterns, for they had heard the loud cracking of the whip. "Only see how the horses reek! From the great pine to this spot in less than twenty minutes—and half the way in the deep snow! Full ten good versts."

Saying this, he jumped off. The servants assisted the ladies in getting out of the sleigh.

Silent and without acknowledgment the Countess leant on the arm of one of the servants with the lanterns, and entered the door.

Bianca lost not a moment in directing immediate attention to be bestowed upon Louis and his unhappy friend. Then she turned to Louis and said: "Here you are my guest, this castle belongs to me; if heaven preserve you through this trying visitation, I trust you will here pass many an hour in tranquillity and happiness."

Louis, who still remained sitting, as he held Bernard's head in his arms, turned toward her when she addressed him. Her soft voice found an easy passage to his heart.

"Ever kind as a messenger of mercy from above," he began—but at this moment Bernard moved and drew a deep sigh: "He lives!" exclaimed Louis in the wildest agitation and regardless of all else. "Blessed be God! He lives, he lives!"

In the first flush of hope and joy he passionately embraced the form of his friend.

"Where am I?" asked Bernard, opening his eyes.

"In my arms!" exclaimed Louis.

Feodorowna raised her eyes to heaven. A bright ray of hope shone upon her also. For the first time after long days of sorrow and suffering, a peaceful serenity once more filled her breast.

Willhofen assisted Louis in conveying the

half-inanimate youth into the room prepared for his reception, and there they deposited him upon a couch. The faithful servant then hastened to procure the necessary remedies for his recovery. The torpid senses of the sufferer soon began to re-awaken. "Louis," he faintly murmured, "do I see you once more? Are we yet among the living—or have we passed away from earth? Or is all this some dream?"

"We are yet alive indeed—a gracious Providence has preserved us. But, dear Bernard, there are other wonders to be seen besides this."

Willhoven entered the apartment with medicines and stimulants prepared in haste by Feodorowna—a servant brought woollen wrappers and other suitable appliances. These latter were now the less necessary, since Bernard had already so far revived as to be able to speak and partially to move. But Willhoven urged him to take the medicines,—alleging their potency in confirming the returning powers of body and mind. Bernard raised the cup to his lips. A few drops imparted a fresh sense of life; and the moral power of expectation soon accomplished the work of entire recovery.

"Come, Ossip," said Willhoven to the servant, "we are no longer of any service here, and there is yet much to be done in other places." So they both left the room.

"Brother," said Bernard, with deep emotion, when they found themselves alone, "on thine own breast hast thou warmed me to life again. Marvellous indeed and inscrutable are the ways of Providence! Under His blessing there is not a drop of blood in my veins that may not be justly claimed as thine own!"

He raised his hand on high as he spoke, and the generous sentiments of his heart were nobly expressed in his care-worn features. His unsubdued spirit bade defiance to the assaults of fate, and rivalled the elasticity of steel, whose resistance increases in proportion to the adverse pressure.

"But now tell me," he continued more calmly, "where are we? how have we escaped? I remember nothing but that I was wandering about in the forest. And what are your own adventures, Lonis?"

Lonis was about to answer, when the door opened, and Feodorowna entered, with her veil thrown back and clothed in mourning. A girandole, that stood on the table near the door, cast a clear light upon her noble features.

"Behold my preserving angel," said Lonis, respectfully pointing out the lady to her admiring guest.

"Your friend lives?—Thanks be to the Father of mercies!"

Her voice was low and tremulous; and as she advanced her gesture and countenance betrayed a confused state of mind.

Bernard raised his astonished eyes to her face.

"These features I know," he exclaimed. "But how, or where, I cannot say—and this voice, too—I have heard it before!"

Feodorowna stood with her eyes fixed, equally spell-bound, upon Bernard's face. The sight of him awakened memories strange and difficult of explication. Under the impulse of a generous and tender confidence, she held out her hand to him. Bernard bent down his head, as if to kiss it, but the moment he fixed his eye upon it, he started, as if stung by an adder. His face, already pale, changed into marble, his lips became blanched and speechless; and his eyes immoveably fixed, he returned the gaze of the lady's mysterious countenance. At length he raised his hands quickly to his temples, and pressed them closely, as if severe pain were seated there.

"What ails thee?" asked Lonis, participating at once in his too apparent excitement.

"Nothing, nothing!" exclaimed Bernard, wildly; but he trembled from head to foot. "Nothing but a fanciful dream. And yet I dread to be awakened out of it. For heaven's sake untie this knot in my hair—I cannot tear it out."

While speaking, he made a violent effort to disengage a lock of his hair. Lonis felt the knot, and readily unloosed it. Bernard's ring fell upon the floor; he hastily caught it up again and offering it to Feodorowna, exclaimed—

"Methinks, this ring looks like yours—I changed it once in Warsaw—it bears the letters—Oh! I am becoming distracted!" he uttered suddenly, as a dark cloud gathered upon his wrinkled brow: "Oh: save me, Louis, from this madness. Touch me—that I may know if I am yet awake."

Feodorowna took the ring out of his hand. As she examined it, comparing it with her own, her eye grew dim. Trembling, she sunk down upon her knees, folded her hands in prayer, and lifting her eyes to heaven, implored its mercy.

"Great fountain of all blessings, try me not too severely! If this heart does not deceive itself, it will break—so great a weight it cannot bear! Have mercy upon my weakness!"

She held the rings averted from her sight, and turned her eyes aside, in fearful anticipation of the story they had to announce. Then, again pressing both vehemently to her breast, as though they were the most precious of earthly possessions, to lose which would

be to lose life—and more than life. Again, with sudden resolution, she fixed an intent gaze upon them. She trembled—her bosom heaved—the deep blush of the rose was upon her cheeks. Anon, she grew pale as the snow, or the lily. The rings fell from her hand—she stretched out her arms towards Bernard—her lips moved, but the agitation of the breast suppressed every sound;—yet, anxiety at length found an utterance: “Brother!—Brother!” she exclaimed, and fell swooning into Bernard’s extended arms. He held the lovely lady fondly pressed to his bosom; but his impaired strength almost failed him;—tears fell fast and frequent from his eyes, and bedewed the head of her whom he clasped in innocent unconsciousness to his heart.

“Louis, Louis!” he at length uttered, in a tender voice; “thou art better, purer than I,—pray, then, to the Eternal Father, that she die not in my arms—he will hear thy entreaties! Beloved one, raise thy head!” Yet once more live in all thy love and tenderness upon the breast of thy loving brother! He raised his sister in his arms, and gently deposited her upon the couch whereon he himself, a few minutes previous, had been awakened to life. There, she once more opened her deep blue eyes, and raised her languid arm with the design of casting it around the neck of her brother. The sacred gush of affection sprang forth for her relief. She soon breathed freely and happily; and this happiness was no less felt than expressed in the beaming radiance of her countenance.

“Is it then true? Yes, yes—thou art indeed my brother! There is a voice within which does not deceive me. It speaks a truth more plainly than can be testified by the external senses. I do indeed recognise thee—I have now a heart that I can call my own upon this earth—a breast that does not rudely repulse me, when there I seek repose. Is it not true, my brother? Thou wilt not again forsake me?”

“Forsake thee!” said Bernard, pressing the trembling object more closely to his breast. “Even as the plant in the dark valley looks for the light of heaven, so have I looked and longed for thee, my dear sister! And now, canst thou believe that I would shut out the flower of my hopes from the beam of light and life which is now poured down upon it? For the first time in life does the light break through the clouds in which I have been enveloped! For the first time, I see this beautiful world glorified in all its rosy splendor! Grey, barren, and immersed in thick mist, it once lay before me;—now it glows in a thousand rich and warm colors! No, nothing shall again part us—not even death itself!—for, in the self-same hour in

which he tears thee from my arms, will I follow thee beyond the precincts of the grave!”

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE sounds of voices and footsteps were heard in the corridor.

“Who comes?” said Bernard, suddenly starting up. “Who comes? Whom have I to fear or to fly from?”

“Here, every one!” exclaimed Feodorowna, hastily disengaging herself from his arms. “Here every one is to be dreaded as an insidious enemy to all pure and secluded happiness. Let no sound of the voice betray us; it is the first demand of thy sister;—ah! do not let it go unheeded!”

Willhofen, two servants, and Feodorowna’s damsel, Jeannette, came in. The latter accosted her mistress, telling her that the Countess Dolgorow desired her presence.

“I will go this moment,” replied Feodorowna. “Farewell!” she continued, turning to Bernard and Louis; “in half an hour, at farthest, we will see you again; for I expect you will appear at supper in the saloon.”

Her looks required an affirmative answer. Bernard and Louis bowed in silence, as she glided out of the room.

“We came with a supply of clothing, worthy gentlemen,” said Willhofen. “The Princess has directed the wardrobe of the late Prince to be opened, that you may make all necessary changes. You must pardon this unceremonious offer, only excusable in the present necessity.”

“Hand them to me, my friend,” said Bernard. “Thou seest we are not clad in court-dresses; besides, torn cloaks and bursting boots do not defend us so well from the cold, as when new and sound. Show us the supplies. Ah! if they only fit decently! Louis, let us not grow vain; we are not used of late to see ourselves so decked out. Why, only look!—I might readily pass for a Russian prince, in this fine fur cloak!”

Bernard spoke intentionally in an easy and jesting tone, because Louis was silent. His object was to evade any suspicion which might arise in the minds of the servants, touching their guests; for he desired that they should have no reason to suppose that anything extraordinary had occurred. Accustomed to command even his deepest feelings with an external show of jest and good-humor, he now had no difficulty in concealing from observation all trace of the passions which had but so recently agitated him.

Willhofen admired the gay and hearty manner of the youth.

"Truly," he exclaimed, "it was lucky, friend, that we lifted you upon the sleigh; for, to become food for wolves, at your early years, would really have been too hard. But will you not pull on these fur boots? The wind whistles here a little sharper than in Germany."

While dressing, Louis and Bernard for the first time enjoyed an opportunity of relating their adventures during their separation.

Bernard mused in silence on the story.

"Wonderful enough," said he, at length; "and Beaucaire and St. Luces have got their deserts at last. There are times, Louis, when I could become a believer, and put faith in a Power above, who is interested in and directs our affairs, and is ever present, yet invisible, by our side, to lead us through all our extremities—to reclaim our errors, and conduct us to our final destination. It is not until the final accomplishment of designs that we discover the means and the way by which the same has been reached. Ah!—truly, various and countless are the strange occurrences of human life!"

"Well, my friend," he continued, turning to Louis, "why so mute and so downcast? Is thy liberty not yet confirmed? Perceivest thou not yet that thy green veil, out of the valley of Aosta, will flourish here, as well on the snow as on the hospice of St. Bernard? I am rejoiced to repeat that name, since I bear it myself."

Speaking thus, he seized Louis' hand and pressed it warmly. His keen eye, deeply searching the heart of his friend, easily detected the cause of his melancholy. But, with a vision equally clear, he saw also that the tender buds of pure love must soon burst into full bloom, and that the brother might then auspiciously join the hand of the sister to that of the friend.

Both were dressed. They descended to the saloon, which Willhofen had indicated to them as the dining-hall. It was lighted by a huge flaming fire, that had been kindled for the occasion. The table, with covers for four persons, stood near the fire.

Willhofen set the girandole he bore in his hand upon the table.

"Make yourselves at ease, gentlemen," he said; "the saloon will soon be warm; the stoves are heated likewise, but it requires some time for them to throw out their warmth. I shall now announce to the Princess that you are waiting here."

He went out. Now Louis and Bernard were alone. Looking long at each other, they fell into an embrace, which was not the less sincere as it was silent.

"Louis," said Bernard at last, "if we only

remember where we awoke this morning, and reflect upon where we shall slumber this night, then shall I really begin to believe, like a good child, in miracles and angels!"

"An angel indeed it is who works these mysteries!" replied Louis, with deep feeling. "His protecting wing was extended over us—his careful hand led us back out of the dark region of death. The greatest marvel remains—he seems to have assumed a visible form!"

The door from the inner apartment at this moment opened, and Feodorowna walked in.

"Ah! behold!—again is it present by our side, to bless us; but the radiance of its beauty is too great for the weak sight of man!"

And Louis turned his face aside, that he might conceal his tears.

"Sister!" said Bernard, cautiously, observing that she came alone. "Sister!—yet once again must I greet thee by that sweet name!"

"Brother!" she ejaculated, stepping unhesitatingly towards him, with the smile of an angel upon her lips. She laid her head upon his bosom, while he cast his arms around her, and kissed her forehead.

Brother!—sister!—what sounds can be sweeter? Brother, sister!

"And friend!" added Bernard, out of the fulness of his feelings, seizing the abashed Louis by the hand. "See, my sister, this man was the clear star of my night of life, until thy beauteous sunlight rose upon me; he will not be extinguished and grow pale, as the faithless stars of the firmament: for, never did a cloud conceal him; and the more dismal the night the more friendly did he shine upon me. Oh! I wish that he was thy brother!—then hadst thou found one better than myself!"

"Bernard," uttered Louis in a tone of reproach!

"Oh! I knew our friend before you met with him!" replied Feodorowna. "My heart is indebted to him deeply on an old account of gratitude; and within these few hours that debt has increased."

"How is this, my dear sister?" asked Bernard.

"May I confess it to thee, brother," she responded, affectionately looking up to him. "Wilt thou not be angry with me?"

"Be angry with thee?"

"Behold!" she continued, in graceful confusion; "the worthiness of the friend excuses me with the brother. Indeed I should have confided in thee," she added more rapidly; "but I desired to leave to him the happy explanation, since the noble alone seeks and loves the noble."

She concealed her lovely and blushing face in Bernard's bosom.

"The same acknowledgment do I also owe him, sister," replied Bernard, with marked emphasis.

"Why so?" she asked in surprise.

"Is he not bound to me through my sister?"

She cast down her eyes to the ground; the loveliest blush tinged her cheek, and she remained silent.

Bernard was the first to speak again. "I have believed in the miracle, before it was explained," he began, "but speak, my sister; by what signs didst thou recognise me so distinctly as thy brother? I myself had but only vague and remote conjectures."

"I came hither," she replied, "on purpose to explain all to thee. See here the token whereby the sight of thy features filled me, from the beginning, with so strong a suspicion of the truth."

She held out to him both the portraits she had received from Rushka through Gregoriush. Bernard gazed upon them with the eye of an artist, and instantly recognised the undeniable resemblance in the male portrait to himself, and the female to Feodorowna. It became instantly a dear consolation to his heart, that his new fortune was no dream; that it rested firmly upon reality. Suddenly he resumed:

"And knowest thou also the name of our parents, sister? For I have grown up rndely among strangers, and have scarcely learned to attach any value to the names and history of those who cast me so unmercifully forth in the world."

"Oh, speak not so cruelly!" replied Feodorowna, with pious horror. "The memory of our parents may be dear to thee. 'Tis true, I am not able to give thee full information concerning them. Yet even herein will you find enough to employ your future thoughts, and cause you to dwell with pity and love on the memory of the past."

"Thou art right, even as thou art amiable; for I must be eternally thankful to them for the blessing at least that they gave me thee for a sister."

Saying these words, he took the letter, in which Rushka had disclosed to Feodorowna the story of her birth, and read it hastily.

In the meantime Louis and Feodorowna conversed together. Louis began to relate to Feodorowna the strange discovery of Willhofen, and that man's connection with his own father's history. Bernard, half reading, half-listening, suddenly exclaimed: "Louis, what do you call the name of this friend of your father's, for whose sake he was driven into exile?"

"Waldheim," replied Louis.

"Waldheim!" exclaimed Feodorowna, in great surprise, while her look towards Louis

and Bernard assumed the guise of a question.

"Thus do we continually detect new threads of this most remarkable web; yet I know not any means of ascertaining the exact truth," answered Bernard.

At this point of the conversation, Willhofen entered the room.

"I am a fool!" continued Bernard, involuntarily striking his forehead. "Let me see the portraits. My perception must be frozen by this severe winter, else I might myself have conjectured that there exists here an adequate witness." He took up both the portraits he had received from his sister, and turned to Willhofen. "Come hither, my friend," he accosted him, "nearer, quite near to us, to the light!"

Willhofen approached with deference and respect.

"Dost thou recognise these pictures?"

A glad surprise glistened in the eyes of the old servant; he trembled, scarcely able to speak.

"Do I know them?" he replied. "Ah! how vivid the past lies marked before me. Have I not an hundred times seen them hanging in the room of Master Waldheim, the captain of cavalry, at Strasburgh, over the sofa? And perchance he yet lives there, and the beautiful woman as well!"

Scarcely had Willhofen spoken these words, when Louis exclaimed: "What? my father—"

"Sacrificed himself for mine," interrupted Bernard. "Seest thou, my friend," he continued with emotion, "that I have many an old debt to repay—not to mention the new ones that have since been added to them!"

"What a marvellous chain!" exclaimed Louis. "What a day of judgment and of retribution!" He thought of St. Luces and Beaucaire, visited by the hand of vengeance in the self-same hour wherein a happier fate extended to him and to his friend the auspicious consummation of all their labors and all their hopes of years gone by.

Feodorowna had listened to these developments in mute astonishment. Now she uttered in her turn: "What! didst thou know my mother, Sola now?"

The man started with agitation: "The Countess Dolgorow?" he asked, looking at Feodorowna with curious and scrutinising eyes, as if he sought in her face an explanation of her singular question.

Feodorowna felt alarmed at having betrayed her secret. Bernard remarked it, and calmed her apprehension: "Fear nothing dearest; this man is faithful. I will be security for him—but now nothing must longer remain a secret from him."

After this he explained the whole mystery to Willhofen, and recommended him to ob-

serve secrecy and precaution. The old servant responded affirmatively to the injunction, and held out his right hand, with the true German cordiality, as a pledge of the same.

"At last I discover," he said, "how it was that the features of the Princess, when first I looked upon them, seemed to be well known to me. Yes, and truly, my young sir—yours too. But, you must excuse my prattling. I came here, in fact, to ask if you would please to direct that supper be served."

"The Countess Dolgorow must first be asked," replied Feodorowna, upon which Willhosen, bowing respectfully, left the room.

He returned with the intelligence that the Countess was so much fatigued that she had gone to bed.

Supper was served. The presence of the attendants confined the warm sentiments of newly awakened affection within the narrow limits of conventional formality. But Feodorowna knew well how to add the grace and charm of friendly kindness to the duties of hospitality—so that not only her lover, but the proud spirit of her brother, bore the restraint imposed upon them with becoming submission. They enjoyed to the full even this hour of control—and it passed too rapidly away.

Feodorowna arose; the servants removed the table and left the saloon. Feodorowna ordered Willhosen to remain close at hand and hold himself ready.

"Now I am again thy sister," commenced she, with an amiable familiarity, leaning towards Bernard—"now I belong again entirely to thee!"

"Thou art indeed a blessing to me!" replied he, looking in her innocent countenance.

Louis maintained a vehement struggle with himself. His heart felt no longer the anxious torment, suspended between the loftiest hopes and the deepest despair. But he felt that the hand of the brother, who knew his love, must not lead him to the sister,—but that he himself must dare and act with manly decision. He who refuses to risk all in pursuit of his loftiest ambition, is not worthy of its accomplishment. This reflection inspired him with a true sense of his duty; yet not without trepidation he prepared to obey the dictates of an honorable suit.

"Bianca," he said, in a tremulous voice, "for the sister of my friend will certainly allow me the use of this name—since it tells of the unforgetton hour of our first meeting—Bianca—on my lip now hangs the fondest wish of my heart. Dost thou not guess ere I pronounce it? If not, must it remain unuttered and lost for ever? Let this moment decide."

She blushed,—a sweet confusion painted itself on her face; her beautiful eye was depressed to the ground as she replied:

"My heart?—I know not—if I may dare obey it—it has decided long since!" Here she concealed her face, her eyes overflowing with sweet tears, on the bosom of her brother.

Bernard enfolded her softly in his arms.

Louis gently took her hand, but he dared not draw the lovely form to his breast. His ear heard the word indeed that opened to him the brightest heaven of bliss—but his heart was perplexed with the horrors of doubt. Too suddenly, too powerfully did the response to his hopes fall upon him. He trembled lest the images of his blissful dream should be dissolved; the vast extent of his good fortune deprived him of the power to realise its fulness or its truth.

She suffered her hand to remain in his, and drew it not back, while he covered it with warm kisses; but she kept her face concealed in the bosom of her brother.

"Do not blush, my sister," said Bernard in an agitated voice, "if thou hast to make a noble confession. Believe me, a rose does not more gracefully adorn the bosom of woman than pure love. Thy heart could not mistake, it has known and chosen the noblest object on which to bestow its regard."

She now raised her head, and her eyes, glistening in tears, she turned herself in maiden modesty to her lover.

"Father of Mercies!" she murmured, directing her eyes gratefully to heaven.

Words and looks were alike absorbed in sacred tears. Without affectation or reserve, she permitted her lover gently to enfold his arm around her and hold her in his happy embrace.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

THUS was formed a holy bond that united three affectionate hearts. They revelled in the memory of the past—directing their happy thoughts to the first moments of their meeting, wherein the seed was planted whose blossom now crowned them with unutterable happiness. Louis told of the day when he first noticed the green veil upon a wide plain of snow, and impelled by irresistible curiosity, hastened to secne the attractive prize.

"Oh, Bianca!" he said tenderly, "believe me, even then, I built up fanciful dreams—enchanted castles of future life. And now a miraculous power has guided us to this point of happiness!"

Feodorowna gave him her hand, and smiled in tender acknowledgment of his love.

"Yes, yes; thou art real!" he continued, "thus didst thou smile when I looked for the

first time upon thy face. Ah! Bianca, dost thou not remember the valley of Aosta—the hut concealed by the clustering grapes—the gigantic chestnut overshadowing the beautiful lawn? Oh! it is an image that will never be effaced from my memory—for it is connected with the vision of her my soul adores!"

She looked at him with an expression of most ineffable sweetness. The silver light of a tear trembled in her blue eye, as she replied:

"Ah! it was beautiful there!"

"And dost thou know, sister," remarked Bernard, "where I first saw thee?"

"Our first meeting was happy!" she replied. "Thou didst save thy sister in an hour of imminent danger, to which she was exposed together with those to whom she had consecrated her youthful duty!"

"No! I knew thee much earlier," he said, smiling; "not in the romantic rural hut, but amid the splendor of the rich and coroneted. It was in London, while witnessing the play of Romeo and Juliet. Dost thou not recollect, sister?"

"How?" she uttered, astonished. "Art thou that young painter?"

"No other, my dear sister! Yesterday, and I could have produced thee the proof; for Louis possessed the portrait for a long time. The rascal, Beaucaire, robbed us of it. But who was that proud English fool who challenged me, and afterwards failed to keep his appointment?"

"Oh, my brother!" replied Bianca, "thus early did I derive from thee a weighty benefit. The Englishman, Lord Glover, was the bridegroom destined for me. That event caused a quarrel between him and my father, because he disapproved of the nobleman's having shrunk from the duel. So the offended pride of the Englishman soon brought about the dissolution of a scheme, from which, not all my supplications and tears could procure my escape."

"What! would they have forced thee?" exclaimed Bernard impetuously.

"The daughter!" replied Bianca, softly and firmly, "believed it to be her duty to obey her parent; her heart did not then know what love was."

"But afterwards you married, sister?"

Louis started at these inopportune words.

Bianca blushed deeply; her modesty was pained, as she replied in a subdued tone:

"I was compelled by circumstances. I bear now the name of Ochalskoi. But I know you will readily forgive your innocent sister."

In a few words she recounted the story of her marriage. Louis sympathised in secret and in silence; but Bernard's proud spirit was fired with displeasure. He rose from his seat and paced the room with uncertain steps.

"Dear sister!" he replied, after some minutes, "from this story, I learn clearly that our welcome here is but on a precarious tenure. We have enjoyed an hour of sweet intermission from misfortune; but we shall be necessarily again driven into action. Tell me, is Count Dolgorow aware that the secret of your birth is known to you?"

"He knows it not. I have been silent on the subject, being desirous not to involve Rushka's brothers."

"And do you still apprehend danger in declaring your secret to him?"

"The greatest," she exclaimed quickly.

"So then, you really fear—"

"All, my brother—for thee—for myself—for thy friend!"

"Then we must take up our own cause. The strictest secrecy, however, is clearly necessary. Sister, I have but one more question to ask. Will you accompany us to Germany? Are you prepared to cast aside rank, power, and riches, and follow the fortunes of your brother and your friend, who offer nothing beyond their hearts and hands?"

"Oh, my brother!" exclaimed Bianca, throwing her arms around him, "can you indeed ask if I am willing to fulfil the most fervent wish of my heart?"

"Well, then," said Bernard, resolutely, "this is the course we have to pursue—secrecy for the present, and flight so soon as a fit opportunity shall offer. And now we must part for the present, lest our protracted conversation should excite suspicion. Tomorrow's sun may perhaps throw further light upon our fortunes."

In Bernard's decisive character, there was the true spirit of control which commanded a ready obedience. The Princess yielded to it, and took her departure—yet not before she bestowed a kind embrace, and a glance of affection upon her companions. She passed through the door leading to the apartments of the Countess. Bernard and Louis betook themselves to their bed-rooms.

In the antechamber Willhofen awaited them. He had been assigned to them as their particular attendant; and in this capacity he now lighted them through the passages to their room.

"Friend—honest servant of my father! wilt thou adhere as faithfully to the son as thou didst to the father?" said Louis, as they closed the door.

"Sir!" exclaimed Willhofen joyfully, "were it only that you are a German, and speak my own language, I should be ready to serve you! But, permit me, worthy sir, to offer a word of admonition. You are standing on a dangerous precipice here. The Count and the Countess Dolgorow entertain far other views than does the Princess."

"Willhofen!" replied Louis, "we are not blind to the dangers with which we are beset—and we look to you for advice how we best may escape from them. You already know so much of our history, that you must necessarily be well prepared. The Princess is the sister of my friend, and my betrothed. She has resolved to follow us to Germany. Can this be speedily and safely done?"

"Possible, it is indeed," answered Willhofen; "but very difficult. Do you suppose, if it were really easy, I would not have fled long since? For this reason alone, I in my old age again took up arms, so that I might approach the German frontier; for I hoped to find an opportunity for flight. But hitherto, it has been entirely impossible, and especially is it so now, when we consider the multitude of peasants, and Cossacks, and the masses of French stragglers that cover the country. Into whose hands soever we fall, we are surely lost! I say we, worthy master, for you will allow me, I hope, to fly with you?"

"We hope so, too, my friend!" replied Louis.

"If you do but secure our flight hence, my friend," said Bernard, "you shall live to a happy old age in Germany."

"Great God!" exclaimed the old man; would he but grant the declining sun of my life to set in peace over that land! I shall try what can be done. I possess some influence with the Countess; I'll see if she gives me her confidence; for we must ascertain at once if she suspects any of our designs. If her suspicion be already awakened, then we have no time to lose; our only chance is in good fortune and promptitude."

"Do what you think best, my friend," said Louis, "and bring us prompt notice."

Willhofen left the room, and the two friends, undressing, were soon fast asleep.

CHAPTER LXXV.

"THE Princess has risen long since," said Willhofen, entering the room next morning; "but she ordered me expressly not to awake you. Yet, it is time, for it is nearly noon."

"Noon!" exclaimed Bernard, springing from his bed with a feeling of shame.

"Oh! the Countess is also still in her bed," answered Willhofen; "the prisoners even are not yet marched off; yesterday was a day of hard work for us all."

"What prisoners?" asked Bernard.

"The Frenchmen we seized yesterday," replied the old man. "See there.—they are

forming them for a march further into the country."

Bernard stepped to the window. The sight of twenty unfortunate men, standing with pale faces—badly clothed—half dead with hunger, and trembling with cold or terror, wounded him to the heart.

"Where are they to go?" he asked.

"Probably," answered Willhofen, in a tone of pity, "where I languished so many years—to Siberia; the way thither is easily found—but back from there is difficult indeed!"

"And how got you there?" exclaimed Louis. "Who had the right to send a shipwrecked mariner into exile?"

"It was in due course of law," said Willhofen, bitterly. "Unknown and destitute I was thrown on the coast. A Russian inn-keeper lent me five roubles—I could not repay him. For this my services were duly made over to him, and he sold me to old Prince Ochalskoi, who, at that time, was forming a colony on his lands near Perm."

"What! for five roubles?"

"For eighteen years I languished in exile, vainly regretting the home and the friends I had so cruelly lost."

"Be of good cheer, my old friend!" said Bernard, laying his hand on his shoulder, "henceforth things will mend. The day has been fine, if the evening be serene. But what is the matter here? The prisoners appear to be separating again?"

Willhofen looked out. A Cossack had entered on horseback into the yard, and spoke to the peasants that accompanied the party.

"I'll soon see what's the matter!" said Willhofen, and hastened out of the room.

In a few minutes he returned with the intelligence that Dolgorow had ordered the prisoners to remain, as he hoped to increase their numbers to-morrow or the day after, by a timely attack on the French rear-guard.

"Then do me the favor, friend," said Bernard, "to see that these unfortunate men are as well cared for as possible."

Willhofen promised to do his best, and went away.

Bernard and Louis, meantime, had dressed themselves, and now descended to the saloon, where they had been informed Bianca waited for their appearance at the breakfast table. But when they entered, they found the apartment vacant, although the table was prepared. A servant soon entered, and announced to them from the Countess Dolgorow, that the Princess would not make her appearance.

Louis felt annoyed, but Bernard scarcely noticing it, sat down to breakfast. The servant having retired, Louis observed:

"What can have happened? Can it be

that the indisposition of the Countess shows symptoms of danger? I was in high glee in the anticipation of our happy reunion this morning—for I believed that the brilliant light of day was alone wanting to throw reality upon our good fortune.

"If, indeed, there be no fresh evil in store for us to-day," said Bernard, as he rose from the table. "I fear there is no good at hand. My sister could not have prevailed upon herself, without the most urgent reason, to neglect to welcome again a lost brother, only yesterday reclaimed. Let us be particularly cautious not to betray ourselves by too many earnest inquiries."

"Do you really believe there is any new peril now besetting us?" asked Louis with alarm.

"I believe anything that is possible, may occur—but I fear nothing!" replied Bernard, firmly. "Perhaps it is only prudence on the part of my sister, that she keeps herself purposely away from us for fear of betraying herself. I am not sufficiently acquainted with Russian usages, to be able to say what is and what is not befitting the character of a hostess. We must have confidence in her, for she has exhibited already as much fortitude as love. Exercise but a reasonable amount of patience, and all will be explained."

Louis was not satisfied—he paced the apartment without speaking.

Soon after this, Willhofen returned to inform them that the prisoners, in consequence of the orders of the Princess, were well cared for, and that their troubles were more on account of the fate that awaited them, than the pressure of their present wants.

Several hours elapsed, yet Bianca did not make her appearance.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

BERNARD proposed to Louis to walk out into the fresh air; the latter assented. They passed out in front of the gates of the castle, thus getting a more accurate view of the building.

It was surrounded by a dense, thickly overgrown forest, through which there were hewn out four broad ways, crossing each other at right angles. These roads were well-trodden; but within the forest the snow lay loose and deep, so that it was evident that the traveller could not quit the roads, with any reasonable hope of penetrating the forest either on foot or mounted.

"The building seems to be old," said Bernard. "Gothic, modern Greek Barbarian—

all styles mingled together. Both those round-towers, with their long, thin points, must have been reared in former ages. How far may we be distant here from the great road?"

"Four or five hours' journey, I heard Willhofen say," replied Louis; "Smolenako lies seven hours from hence."

"So I too estimate the distance," Bernard remarked. "It must lie in that direction. We should be obliged to take our way through the broad alleys."

"It is the same by which we arrived yesterday," said Louis.

"Do you hear?" exclaimed Bernard suddenly, and inclining his head to the side whence the sound came, he put his hand to his ear to catch the distant echo.

"That is the thunder of cannon in the direction of the great road; but very distant."

"The forest intercepts the sound," said Louis, endeavoring to distinguish the remote and confused rumbling.

"It is probably the corps of Marshal Ney repelling an assault—and yet further probable that Rasinski is in the midst of the fight."

"Rasinski," exclaimed Louis: "what anxiety may his noble heart not be suffering on our account! Oh! that I could communicate to him but one brief notice of our condition!"

"Really it would be desirable," said Bernard; but he shook his head, as if the wish were impracticable.

"I must own, that comfortable as we are in this castle, I nevertheless would prefer finding myself with my sister under his protection, to remaining here. This dreadful march must some time come to an end. Every day we would be nearer home and the stores of the army. The road will soon become quite level—I believe the greatest difficulties have already been overcome."

"Ah," said Louis, "if we could but once more set foot upon the soil of our country."

As they listened to the distant reverberations, the two friends continued to pace up and down. In the meantime, it had become late in the afternoon, and twilight was approaching. They re-entered the castle; this hour having been intimated to them as that of dinner. The cloth was already spread, but only for two guests; even Willhofen could not give any further information of the Princess, or the reason of her absence, except that probably she was in attendance upon the invalid Countess.

"Keep up your spirits before the servants," whispered Bernard to Louis, who felt perplexed in the extreme; "no one should be permitted to suspect that we are anxious about anything."

Saying this, he filled a glass of wine, and pledged Louis, in familiar manner, to the health of the noble inhabitants of the castle. During the whole dinner time he was calm and cheerful, and even jested with the servants, of whom he asked some Russian words, that he might make himself understood by them. Becoming dark, lights were brought in. Bernard, desirous that their conversation should not flag, commenced talking about Scotland. Louis listened in secret misgiving—his fears were becoming more and more vivid every moment. It was now seven o'clock; the ordinary politeness towards guests required that the hostess should visit them. Bianca must have been hindered by the most urgent circumstances.

Partly for amusement, partly to conceal his disquietude, each had taken down a book from the book-case; and sitting on either side of the table, they began to read a volume of Voltaire. The servants in the meantime completed their duties, and left the room.

But scarcely had they been a moment alone, than Willhofen came in, looked cautiously around, and finding no interruption, quietly and secretly handed a note to Bernard.

He immediately read a few words written with pencil in English: "Dear brother, when all are asleep, come under the window of my bedroom."

Having run his eyes over this important communication, he asked Willhofen if he was aware of the contents of the note.

"I believe I am," replied the man—"it was given to me by the Princess' waiting-woman."

Bernard took a few unquiet turns up and down the apartment. After some inconclusive meditation, he asked Willhofen if he knew the situation of the Princess' room.

The man answered in the affirmative.

"When all are asleep, I must be under her window. Can you conduct me thither with safety and certainty?"

"Easily enough, sir," replied Willhofen, "and in the meantime, I shall take good care that the watchman shall find it an easier job to open the old gate than his own eyes."

"What time do the people go to bed?"

"Before midnight; at twelve o'clock we are safe—except the thieving mice we shall meet no living creature about the castle."

"Then come to us about that hour, in our own apartments, and remember, my friend, this is an important service you have to render me."

Willhofen assented, and for the present took his leave.

Bernard and Louis soon afterwards retired to their own room, where they impatiently

awaited the arrival of midnight. The hours appeared to creep slowly along.

They listened anxiously to every sound in the castle. They heard with nervous interest the opening and shutting of the various doors, the footsteps of the servants along the passages and upon the stairs, and the voices of those who called and those who answered. Occasionally unbroken silence would prevail for the space of several minutes;—then suddenly the drawing of a bolt, or the noise of some other domestic work, would again interrupt the stillness of the hour. Thus they kept their impatient watch, until it seemed that the whole castle was deep buried in slumber.

"All is still as the grave," said Bernard, quietly opening the door, and thrusting his head into the corridor.

"It must be near midnight; I wish Willhofen would come and relieve us from our uncertainty."

Louis was tormented with the alternations of hope and fear. But he said little, not desiring to increase Bernard's apparent inquietude.

"How the wind whistles through the chimney! It may be a beautiful night without, but I think it has become somewhat colder. Our windows are covered with frost in spite of the glowing stove. But hark! there is a rustling sound along the passage. It is approaching the door.. Probably it is Willhofen—that old man is a fox; he comes softly upon his toes, and I believe without shoes."

He listened, he heard as it were the sound of a step cautiously advancing. Bernard, partially opening the door, whispered :

"Is it you, friend?"

"It is I," answered the gentle voice of a female, who at the same time pushed open the door, and entered the room. She seemed to be the Princess' maid-servant, who appeared to have assumed a partial disguise, as her features were half-concealed in a kerchief bound round her head.

The two friends stood mute. Bernard suspecting some unlucky mischance of an intrigue, peevishly said to her, "You are in error here, young woman."

"No. I have not missed the right door," answered the girl, in a well-known voice, at the same time taking off the kerchief which covered half her face. It was Bianca.

"Sister, is it you, in this disguise?" exclaimed Bernard; "for heaven's sake, what does all this mean?"

"Necessity has imposed this course upon me!" replied Bianca; "being a captive, I could reach you only in disguise."

"You a captive?" exclaimed both Bernard and Louis.

"Let me be quick, for the moments are precious," replied Bianca. "I fear our secret is half if not entirely betrayed. We must have been watched yesterday. When I left you and repaired to the Countess, I found her in the greatest excitement; she sat up nearly dressed on the sofa in waiting for me. Upon my entering the room, she hastily collected her papers, and began to speak of indifferent matters; but in her countenance her extreme disquietude was not to be mistaken. Although I suspected what might have happened, I made no inquiries through fear of arousing her temper. I betook myself very shortly to my work-room, which is contiguous to the dwelling-room of the Countess; and thence to my bed-room, where Jeannette was waiting for me. I suffered her to undress me at once, and then I sent her away. Full of apprehension I did not lie down. Slightly opening the door of my work-room, I discovered that the Countess was yet awake, and that she was conversing with some one. I could not distinguish what was said, but I thought I recognised the voice of the Count's confidential valet. At length, all became entirely silent, and I went to rest. But in the night I distinctly heard the gate open and a sleigh driving away. This morning I presented myself to my foster-mother. So strong were the traces of doubt and suspicion on her countenance, that I could not but believe that our secret was at least partially discovered. But the Countess betrayed nothing in words. I had already resolved on taking breakfast by myself in my own room, to avoid giving cause for observation; but I would have come to dinner. The Countess, however, intimated to me that she expected I would pass the day with her, it not being seemly that I should, while she remained indisposed, dine alone with two strangers. She added, that it might lead to some difficulty if I continued intercourse with you during the absence of the Count. I submitted to her will; but I was more and more confirmed in what I had surmised, that something must have transpired. In the course of the forenoon I was going into my room, when I perceived accidentally that the door leading into the corridor was fastened, and the key taken away. Now I saw through all; I was a prisoner of the Countess; she must have learnt our secret. The Count's valet has not made his appearance during the day; I suppose he has been sent to the Count. I resolved therefore to inform thee, my brother, of all these matters—and I sent thee a note by means of Jeannette and Sola-now. But I reflected afterwards that our conversation at the window might prove very dangerous. I requested Jeannette,

therefore, to remain in my room all night, under the pretext that I was myself fatigued, and particularly indisposed. When she had fallen asleep, I quietly put on her clothes, and passed undetected through the room of the Countess. And now I ask thee, my brother, what are we to do?"

"Immediate flight seems to me to be the only means of safety," Bernard instantly replied. "If it were possible to reach Smolensko this very night!"

"Possible it certainly is. But, are we to encounter such an extremity before compelled by peril so to do? Oh! my brother! although the sacred bond of love and confidence, which should connect the hearts of parents and children, has been rudely torn asunder, nevertheless, I feel myself fettered by a thousand ties of duty and gratitude. Must I separate myself from them as a stealthy fugitive, in the night-time? If at length so compelled to act, my conscience will, at least, upbraid me with cruelty and cold ingratitude."

"But, dear sister, what will you do?" replied Bernard. "You confess that you dare not acknowledge your brother before your assumed parents. Besides, have they been actuated by parental love in their dealings?—or, have they not rather sacrificed you, for the unworthy purpose of making a profit out of your beauty?"

"It is but too true! But the germs of duty implanted in the breast of infancy, have, in the course of eighteen summers, matured into strength. I once loved my parents with deep veneration, for I had received only benefits at their hands; now, indeed, experience has rendered that love cold and formal. Yet, notwithstanding the heart has been robbed of its warm spirit of filial love, it must ever remain bound by the ties, and subject to the calls of gratitude. The benefits we receive from others, although they may not have originally flowed from pure motives, are not less binding on our conscience. And now, brother, I throw myself upon you for advice. Your firm decision and manly arm must direct and protect me amid these doubts and difficulties."

As she said this, she took his hand and looked up into his face with an earnest and imploring gaze.

"Thou art right, sister," he answered;—"noble alike in thy womanly patience and in thine all-forgiving heart! I, with my prouder and harsher feelings, think otherwise, and in my own way, am right also. We must fly," he added, decisively; "I urge thee to that course, and will take all the responsibility upon myself. You must accompany us, sister—it is necessary—and this step must be taken, let what will follow."

"Yes, I believe he is right," said Louis, approaching the object of his heart. "In this case, the authority of the brother is superior to any that can detain you here."

"There may be a greater, and that may be thine," said Bernard, gravely. "Do not blush, sister, and mistrust not its truth, because it happens at the same time to coincide with the warmest desires of thine own heart. I know full well that noble-hearted men are ever afraid to do that which is right, if it chance to be in accordance with their private desires. The most self-denying are not alone or always the most virtuous. Confide in me, I can decide dispassionately; break the fetters which, forged half by love, half by power, hinders the free decision of thy will."

"Well, thus shall it be," she said, after some moments of internal conflict; "I obey thee, my brother!"

"And instantly," interrupted Bernard; "for every minute's delay is pregnant with danger."

"And whither do you design to fly?" asked Bianca.

"To Smolensko."

"What!" she exclaimed in alarm; "and does not the sword of death there hang over your head?"

"Since our cruel accusers have so fearfully perished," answered Louis, "I do not apprehend any future peril. Not our crimes, but the desire to make us criminal, brought us into jeopardy."

"Then I will readily go along with you even thither. Willhofen will find us a sleigh."

"We expect him here every moment, because he engaged to conduct me at midnight to the window," answered Bernard. "But what is that noise? Hark!—the crack of whips and sound of bells, quite distinct!"

Bianca grew pale.

"A sleigh is driving up to the gate of the castle. It is my father!"

"Whether he be there or not," exclaimed Bernard, "now is the moment for flight. Hasten back to thy room, sister, before the arrival of the sleigh shall awake the people in the house. As soon as all shall be quiet again I will be under thy window."

He made her hastie away. She glided with hasty steps down the long corridor. Scarcely had she vanished when the approaching sleigh stopped before the gate of the castle; and so loud and vehement was the knocking, that it could not be doubted the proprietor himself was demanding admittance.

The gate opened. Bernard listened through the half-open door. Two men came up the stairs, but a confused noise of voices led to the conjecture, that others who had arrived remained below. Now Bernard recognised the valet, who, with a girandole in his hand

lighted a gentleman, closely enveloped in furs, whom Louis declared to be the Count. He took his way to the apartments of the Countess. Again, all became silent—not a sound was to be heard.

Bernard and Louis waited about a quarter of an hour in anxious expectation. Then a gentle knock was heard at the door;—it was Willhofen. The benevolent and intelligent old man had already divined almost the whole particulars of the matter. He was of opinion that for this night there was nothing more to be attempted, without rendering the situation of affairs more perilous than at present. Under this view, he undertook to throw a note from Bernard into the window of the Princess, making her acquainted with the resolution at which they had arrived. Having successfully accomplished this object, he returned to make his report, and engaged to watch accurately every movement, and give timely notice of all that should happen.

The night was passed by all parties in a state of feverish excitement, and sleep was perpetually disturbed by so many sources of uneasiness.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

THE Countess Dolgorow had conjectured rather than discovered the relation which Bianca bore to her guests. By accident Jeannette had betrayed the secret, and it happened in this way:—At the moment Bianca first recognized her brother, Jeannette came with a message for her mistress. Arriving at the door, she heard loud and earnest expressions used, and distinguished the words, "brother" and "sister." Surprised at these words, she stopped and listened, but without any unworthy design, beyond curiosity. Willhofen and other servants approached, and the sound of their steps on the corridor was heard by Louis, who had not detected the lighter steps of the girl. The approach of these people had interrupted the first confidential endearments of the brother and sister. Jeannette probably remarked on her entrance, that something extraordinary had occurred. The Count's valet, James, happened to be the girl's favored admirer, and commanded her confidence. In the weakness usual to her sex, the girl thoughtlessly communicated to him all her observations, and perhaps a little more, little dreaming that in so doing she put in fearful jeopardy the fortunes and the happiness of her beloved mistress. But James was cunning enough in dealing with matters of this kind.

"Listen, Jeannette," said he to her; "if the Princess tells you nothing about these matters, by no means betray, by word or look, that you know or suspect anything about them. There is nothing more dangerous for servants than to detect secrets of their masters and mistresses against their will. Although it may at first appear to be advantageous, yet in the end it is always attended with unprofitable consequences. We are compelled, therefore, even under palpable circumstances, to observe a discreet silence."

The intimidated girl was by this warning deterred from holding any communication with her mistress; and, with the best intentions herself, she did not suspect mischief in others. But James commenced a system of espionage so adroit, that, in the course of an hour or two, he had succeeded in discovering that the Princess, at least, concealed her thoughts and views from the knowledge of the Countess. This was a sufficient basis for his operations, and he determined to make the best use of his knowledge, so far as it tended for his own advantage. He repaired accordingly to the Countess, and, speaking to her at first only in hints, he was gratified to find that the lady entered with the deepest interest into the nature of his communications; and, with this encouragement, he proceeded to enlarge upon all he knew, as well as all he was disposed to suspect. The Countess promised him a rich reward if he would be silent to everybody, and fulfil only her orders in this matter. James, avaricious, astute, and enterprising, agreed to the terms, without saying a word thereon to Jeannette, whose devotion to the Princess he well knew; the same night he set off with letters from the Countess to her husband, and had now returned with him. The information must have proved to the Count of the most vital importance, since for a season he suspended his zealous persecution of the enemies of his country, for the purpose of looking after his own affairs.

He found the Countess, whose indisposition had its origin in unusual fatigue, yet undressed. The mental excitement in which she had been since yesterday had restored her to the full, though morbid, force of her energies.

"Now, what do you say to my discovery?" she accosted him, when she found herself alone with him. "What do you resolve to do?"

"First of all," replied Dolgorow, "I must know how far your information is correct, and whether Feodorowna is aware that you are acquainted with her present condition."

The Countess, in relating her story, did not forget the measures of precaution she had taken all day to prevent a meeting of the brother and sister. Dolgorow, during the whole narration, paced with folded arms, up and

down the apartment—a deep gloom settled upon his brow.

"And which of the two strangers is to be the brother?" he asked, as the Countess finished.

With marked confusion, the Countess confessed that she did not know. She had hitherto certainly supposed it to be Louis, having been naturally led to this conclusion by her own observation of the manner in which Bianca had treated him, and of which she had complained. But now that the Count put the question direct to her, she at once perceived that there was a difficulty for which she could not satisfactorily account, and which appeared to involve the whole matter in doubt.

"It is much to be regretted that you resorted to the unfortunate measure of confining her," said Dolgorow, whose tone of voice betrayed displeasure. "I do not comprehend of what use it could be to you. It was only an unhappy resort to the severity of maternal authority, which, since her marriage, has no longer any legitimate existence. How did she bear this interference with her personal liberty?"

"She did not make any objection to it," replied the Countess, perplexed.

"Then there is at least some hope that she did not detect your object," said the Count, and he expressed himself as relieved of a portion of his anxiety.

The Countess, it is true, knew very well that it was otherwise, for the proof was manifested to her eyes all day, in the fact that her own room had been the only passage for the servant girl. But she confirmed Dolgorow's presumption that she might escape his further reproaches, which were not very delicately conveyed to her ears.

"That may save us much trouble," he said with more tranquillity: "and even if the Princess should really have noticed the fact, the whole may be represented as an accident imputable to the servants. For this night, therefore, we can undertake nothing further; to-morrow, I myself, will see and observe. For Heaven's sake, take no more steps in this matter, until we at least know exactly how far our secret is betrayed. That this fellow James should know anything of our affairs, is in itself a great evil. It is true, the whole truth is a paradox to him, and I can easily perceive he does not doubt but that Feodorowna is our own daughter; but he thinks an unexpectedly-returned brother to be a son, whom we, for some good reason best known to ourselves, have hitherto kept at a distance. Yes, I suspect his sole object and design was, to excite your jealousy by the discovery. But this is of little importance. It is only unfortunate that such a fellow should have any occasion to indulge remarks or suspicions on such a subject."

Dolgorow was silent for a time while he paced to and fro in deep meditation. But the importance of the subject compelled him to resume :

"Perhaps, after all, it is but a false alarm. Yet the more need have we to be cautious in our proceedings, for we cannot know how long Feodorowna and her presumptive brother have been in secret communication, and whether or not they have had the precaution to deposit their proofs in places which are inaccessible to us. We might in this latter case be thrown into a most fearful dilemma. I shall not know the whole until to-morrow. It is true, I came with the resolution of taking at once the most decided steps, and I think, Countess, you know me well enough to be aware that I do not hesitate in my projects. We are not so timid and weak-hearted in Russia ; I know as well as others in these dominions, that an obstacle in our path must be removed at any hazard. But there is no need of haste ! Perhaps I may succeed in finding a better and surer way by going round the bush. Good night !—I shall sleep more quietly than I believed. Yet one thing,—we must not contradict ourselves. My arrival here was accidental ; do you understand, Countess, accidental ! For the rest, I shall be the first to-morrow kindly to greet Feodorowna, and express my surprise and anger that her door was locked."

Saying this, he took his leave, following James, who waited for him in the ante-chamber, to his own room.

But the disquieting state of his mind suffered him not to sleep ; the long slumbering conscience was deeply and rudely awakened. Whatever might be the denouement of this strange drama, he at least learned that the seed of crime, be it ever so deeply buried—be it ever so widely scattered by the storm—will yet germinate until its bitter fruits are fully matured.

"Fool!" he soliloquised, "why dost thou so torment thyself ? Thy ends are secured—thou art in possession, and who shall despoil thee ? But if the Ochalskoi should discover that there had been deceit ? As father of Feodorowna, even thy rights are valuable ! But who will contest them with thee ? The lips of the only being who could have testified, are sealed forever—Rushka sleeps ! Vain phantoms of a diseased imagination, why should they terrify me ?"

Nevertheless, they did torment him until morning dawned upon the scene.

In the meantime, his plans were matured, and he possessed dexterity and power to execute them. His first visit was to Bernard and Louis, whom he welcomed as guests to his house. With the experience of a courtier he played the obliging host, inquiring after

their health, and into the manner of their reception and entertainment, without betraying the remotest clue to his insincerity. Louis, knowing the world little, and whose noble heart was never easily aroused to suspicion, would have readily permitted himself to be deceived by this conduct. Bernard, on the contrary, feared evil the more, the more gracious the Count feigned himself to be ; he therefore assumed the same mask in return, and pretended to yield him his most open and generous confidence, while cautiously concealing his inward sentiments. He succeeded to admiration in playing the part of a confiding recipient of the Count's bountiful kindness. He proceeded even so far in this, that he openly related to the Count his adventure with Bianca in London : "I am that painter," he said, with all the ease of the world's man. "We artists claim a fair countenance to a certain degree as our property, and who can forbid us ? Therefore, you must, my dear Count, excuse my familiarity with the lady—a familiarity which, by courtesy, ought not to be judged by the ordinary laws of conventional propriety."

"We are not such barbarians here in Russia !" replied Dolgorow, with a smile, "as not to concede to the artist so sacred a privilege. But do you possess the portrait ?"

"I had it two days ago, or rather my friend here, to whom I made it a present, since it awakened in his mind some agreeable remembrances. His pocket-book, in which it was kept, was taken from him by those villains, who, by your command, I learn, yesterday received their just doom. In whose hands it now is, I know not."

"There were delivered to me yesterday," replied Dolgorow : "two pocket-books, one of which was found on the prisoners. But I own I have not yet thought to open them. I am now, indeed, desirous of seeing if this portrait be there."

Saying this, he hastened to his room, and returned with two pocket-books, one of which he held opened in his hand. It was the one belonging to Louis. The Count, holding the picture towards Bernard, observed :

"Do you recognise your work ?"

"How should I not ?"

"Then it is just that you take back your property."

"It is, as I said, no longer mine, but that of my friend."

The Count handed to Louis the pocket book, out of which all the papers had vanished. Dolgorow had but just taken them out, inasmuch as he hoped to find some information in them. He excused himself by observing, that the pocket-book had been handed over to him in this condition ; so that proba-

bly Beaucaire had already rifled it of its contents. The second pocket-book was neither Bernard's nor Louis' property; the Count, therefore, retained it, and retired for the purpose of paying Feodorowna a morning visit.

"It is of infinite value to me that this portrait has come again into my possession," said Louis. "I feel myself quite happy and at ease; all danger seems to be passed, and the Count is a man, I should think, worthy of all confidence."

"Truly, one might laugh," said Bernard, "if the time and the place were not more convenient for cursing or praying! We might merrily exult indeed, were it not that so wise and good a man as thou art is as blind as an owl. Oh, Louis! Louis! thou art too good for this world—as I fear my sister is also—seeing she suffers herself to be so deceived. Will you then remain an infant through life, and willingly cherish a snake in your bosom, because it has a variegated skin? Will you never learn that the beautiful but ferocious tiger feigns sleep when most intent upon his prey? Is not a trap baited to allure its victim? Do not roses conceal thorns? Louis, Louis! this smiling courtesy of Dolgorow is, to my mind, more foreboding to us, than if he stood before us with a drawn sword!"

"You look too much on the dark side of things, Bernard," replied Louis.

"You think so?" returned Bernard, almost scornfully. "Is it nothing, that Bianca is a prisoner? This hasty arrival by night, is it, think you, an accident? Louis, if the means of escape were now open to us, it would be far more prudent to take our instant departure than remain here another hour. Were it not for my sister, you and I should leave this accursed place before the next hour strikes."

Willhofen entered, interrupting their discourse. He announced breakfast awaiting. They descended to the saloon. Here they waited alone for some minutes, when Dolgorow made his appearance. He was as courteous as before, invited them to be seated, and himself offered them chocolate and viands.

"Our ladies," he said, "rise somewhat late. We probably shall not see them before dinner. The Countess was yesterday a little indisposed, and this circumstance deprived the Princess of the pleasure of performing the duties of hostess towards you. I think they will to-day make up for their former neglect."

Bernard ventured to introduce the subject of politics.

"Perhaps we had better not converse on this topic," replied the Count, with much suavity. "I myself being a Russian, should perhaps be obliged to think quite otherwise

than you, who have your old associates in the French army. It is of peculiar interest to me," he continued, "that I have met with both of you elsewhere. When we were accidentally separated at the foot of the Simplon, over which, through your kind and effectual aid," he added, addressing Louis, "we so happily made good our passage, I turned again through the mountains to Berne—departed thence to the Tyrol, and gained the great road to Munich. In passing through Germany we experienced no molestation until we arrived at Warsaw, where we were on the point of being betrayed, and it was only after strict and cautious concealment among our friends that we finally succeeded in escaping by night."

"We were also at Warsaw," said Louis.

Bernard made a sign to Louis to be cautious in his speech; he immediately interposed his own remarks on general subjects, and alluded only in a cursory and indefinite manner to their residence there. The Count asked a variety of questions; he spoke about England; inquired into the particulars of Bernard's earlier years and his subsequent travels, and in fact contrived, with great ingenuity, to extract a tolerably accurate account of the career of both the young men. Bernard, it is true, answered with the greatest circumspection, but it was not possible to conceal everything, and the Count was soon so well informed of Louis' personal history, that he could not doubt but that Bernard was the brother of Feodorowna, if indeed one of them stood so related at all. He scrutinised Bernard's features with a view to confirm or invalidate the truth of this supposition. But here the Count was at fault. It happened that Bernard resembled mainly his father, and Bianca her mother—between them there existed rather a contrast than a natural resemblance, and yet there were still some peculiar and half-concealed outlines. Louis' features, on the other hand, presented far greater probability of relationship. Bernard suspected Dolgorow's design, and ingeniously contrived to introduce an accidental allusion to his birth in Dresden, alleging himself to be the son of a poor chorister in the Church of the Holy Cross, who died some three years before, and by his last will left to his son the freedom of pushing his way in the world, and roaming whithersoever he pleased.

Dolgorow remained indeed in a perplexing state of doubt as to whether or not his secret was detected—whether or not some ambiguous circumstance, some half-understood words, some exaggerated trifle, had not presented to the jealous eye of suspicion the appearance of discovery. That he might not excite attention by protracted or anxious inquiries, he proposed to his guests a trial of skill

on the chess-board. Louis excused himself as but little acquainted with the game, but Bernard accepted the proposal apparently with great readiness. A servant soon set the board before them, and they sat down to play. Louis remained in the room, a silent spectator of the contest.

"I have a powerful antagonist," remarked the Count after a few moves. "It will give me some trouble to defend myself."

"Your judgment, Count Dolgorow, proves your superiority," Bernard answered politely.

They continued playing for some time, and seemed to participate deeply in the interest of the game, although in truth the minds of both the players were secretly intent on far other and more important objects. Bernard possessed that degree of self-command which enabled him to pay attention to the game, and he did not suffer himself to betray, by any indiscretion or neglect, his indifference to the honors of victory.

Thus passed the hours of the forenoon; the dinner hour was approaching. The Countess as well as Bianca were expected to appear at table. When the Count, in the morning, had visited his daughter, he had remarked that attendance at dinner was a domestic duty which could not be neglected, but that yesterday it was necessarily interrupted by the indisposition of the Countess. In spite of Dolgorow's ingenuity in governing his words and actions, and assuming every variety of address, Bianca knew him well. She was well acquainted with his career in diplomacy, and did not, therefore, allow herself to be deceived by his apparently unassuming demeanor. But when he made the attempt to pass through the door that formed the proper egress from her room, and pretended to be surprised that it was locked, she obtained the fullest certainty that he was enacting a part; especially as he, at the same time, and with a certain zeal which an indifferent circumstance would not have called forth, ordered Jeannette to ask his valet if he had the key, and to take care that the door was quickly opened. In the meantime he retired through the Countess's room, and soon after the lock shot back in the door. But Bianca knew but too well that she had not by this acquired her real liberty, but only the appearance of it; and that now her every movement would be watched the more narrowly. Nevertheless flight did not appear to her to be utterly impossible. Her feelings, therefore, were more in need of consolation than her reason of support. She must break through old and sacred ties, and assume others of a character far more endearing; and she must leave parents, and country, and a splendid name, and enter on an entirely new world. Although fully de-

termined to do her duty in this matter, yet in the very hour of performance she could not but feel the numberless ties which the customs of life entwine around us, and whose powers to bind us we are not sensible of, until on the point of breaking through them for ever. In her extremity, she wrote a letter to Gregorius, her paternal friend and adviser—the depository of her secret—entreating him urgently, so soon as it should be possible, to come to the castle; but she was cautious enough not to explain to him the motive of her prayer. Willhofen engaged to despatch the letter by a sure messenger, and intimated an hour afterwards that he had succeeded.

Now her heart felt itself wonderfully relieved; her confidence in the dear old teacher was unbounded; she felt that his presence would afford her protection and consolation; for it was his duty to offer her both, and where his duty pointed, she knew that his courage was not to be shaken.

She accompanied her mother to the dining-room. Here she again saw Louis and Bernard after a separation so painful to her feelings. Her heart palpitated with unusual vehemence; yet, with great exertion, she so far commanded her feelings as not to incur any great peril. She had always been remarkable for liberality and benevolence, and her established character, therefore, protected her from remark on account of her behavior to her guests. Thus she continued to pass the hours of dinner without incurring any new suspicion of her connexion with the visitors. Bernard himself so managed the thread of the conversation as to lead it to the subject of travels, and of his own in particular, and of England and the fine arts; and he contrived also to lead Louis into these general subjects, wherein, with great good sense, he acquitted himself to admiration. All this proved a great relief to Bianca. Even Dolgorow himself was shaken, and entertained the hope that all his apprehensions had no firmer basis than accident or misconstruction.

At length they rose from the table, and the ladies prepared to retire. Bianca seized a moment when she believed herself unnoticed, and whispered to Bernard the words:

"Be confident—I hope for a fortunate change."

But Dolgorow, who at that moment was reading letters brought in by James, chanced accidentally to be looking over the paper near a mirror, in which he saw the entire persons of Bernard and Bianca. He noticed their familiar approach, remarked their whispering and emotion. It is true he had not heard a syllable, but in the conduct of both he perceived the confirmation of a suspected confidence, which could be justified only

by the nearest relationship; and he was the more impressed when both—the door being unexpectedly opened—suddenly changed the expression of their countenances, and assumed again the formal bearing of ordinary courtesy.

In fact, what really had occurred, never could have taken place between the Princess Ochalskoi and a stranger without name or rank. Dolgorow therefore was suddenly put in possession of irrefutable proof of what had heretofore amounted only to suspicion. He was so much thrown off his guard as to be betrayed into the exhibition of an impatient gesture and a half-suppressed exclamation of anger; and the consciousness of having betrayed this weakness after the circumspection he had hitherto observed, and his recent inclination to abandon his suspicions, only irritated him the more. But as rapidly as he had lost his balance he regained it again, repeating, for appearances' sake, the exclamation, and vehemently stamping on the ground, and referring his excitement to the information he had received in the letters he was reading.

"It is unheard of—unpardonable!" he exclaimed, fiercely crushing the letter in his hand. "Such proceedings are enough to drive a man crazy!"

Even Bernard was hoodwinked by this pretext, not suspecting that his own secret had that moment been discovered by the Count. Dexterously availing himself of this explosion of the Count's wrath, he addressed him in a tone of respectful sympathy:

"I apprehend with regret, Count Dolgorow, that you have received some unpalatable intelligence."

"How can it be otherwise?" replied Dolgorow, "ever new excuses for inveterate errors! It is all one system of perversion; absurd changes; propositions and orders perpetually at variance with each other, and destroying alike confidence and co-operation! There is no end of vexation to the soldier and the patriot! Pardon me, my friends, but I must retire for a time, that my indignation may exhaust itself without offence to others."

Saying this, he bowed and left the room, and at the same time the ladies also took their departure.

Scarcely had Dolgorow entered his room, when he rang the bell for his man, designing to question him yet once more about all he had actually seen and heard.

James aptly perceiving how important this matter was to his master, thought it prudent to be silent; partly because he did not choose to divide the discovery with any other party, and partly to retain himself in good repute with Jeannette; for, to have rela-

ted all he knew, would necessarily have involved her to whom he was indebted for the more important particulars. He therefore answered the Count's questions very unsatisfactorily. The Count at length dismissed him, and remained in meditation. A sudden light seemed to beam upon him. "Fool that I am," he exclaimed, "how could I be so stupid as not to think of it before!" Either the one or the other of them must have some letters or documents, or other means of recognition, otherwise it is impossible that they could have become known to each other. This will prove a source of correct information. To commence, then, let us see what we can find by examining Feodorowna's apartment.

He rang the bell. James answered it.

"Is the Princess in her room?"

"No, sir. Her ladyship is with your gracious Countess."

"All right! You can go."

So soon as the servant had departed, Dolgorow lighted a small dark lantern, concealed it under his cloak, and hastened to Bianca's room. He succeeded in entering unnoticed. Instantly bolting the door, he commenced the examination. He had taken with him some master-keys, against which scarce any lock stood proof. These keys were a part of his implements as a diplomatist, wherewith he was enabled in security to possess himself of the contents of letters not intended for his eye indeed, but of importance to his interests or designs. With the help of these instruments he succeeded very soon in opening Bianca's writing-table. After a brief search he found among her papers that of Rushka, lying uppermost, having been returned to her hands only but a short time before. This removed all doubts, saying nothing of the additional evidence he obtained from the pocket-book in which he found the portraits of the parents. The resemblance of these portraits to the children was not to be mistaken. It needed no tedious unravelling or lengthened inquiry to attain this truth—that Bernard was the long-lost and recently-found brother. He carefully replaced every thing in its proper place, unlocked the door, and hastily returned to his room. His ingenuity was now taxed for the design best suited for the purpose of destroying at once the nascent mischief. Nor was he long in coming to a conclusion. In the first place, Feodorowna's silence must be enforced by menace denounced against the dearest objects of her love. This was not a difficult task for this unscrupulous man: but it so happened that there were obstacles in the way of its practical accomplishment. He determined, indeed, that Bernard and Louis must partake of the fate of

the Frenchmen now prisoners in the castle. Their lives were then dependent on Feodorowna's consent to swear upon the *host*, never to betray his secret. But to effect all this, there was required a stronger body of men than was now at his disposal in the castle. Except the servants, of whom the greater number were serfs of Feodorowna, and on whom Dolgorow could not rely in case of extremity, there was not an efficient number at his disposal. Bernard and Louis alone could make such a resistance, that probably they would perish in the conflict, and then the security for the secret was lost.

Dolgorow was unprepared for any attempt endangering the life of the Princess, partly because he knew that her serfs would regard such a deed with utter abhorrence, and would probably avenge it,—partly because he foresaw that the Countess would never give her consent to so base a deed, and above all, because he himself felt that such an act would exceed even his own measure of wickedness. Even the worst of men can imagine something beyond the reach of their own vicious will, and hesitate to transcend the imaginary barrier.

The deepest abyss of crime is not utterly unfathomable—a point may be reached where the hand of man can be stopped in its course. There is no reasonable being so utterly profigate as not to be capable of acknowledging a limit, however remote, to his vileness, beyond which he trembles to penetrate; and would rather lose the reward of his criminal efforts, than incur the imaginary guilt of transgressing its pale. The moral government of Providence is manifest herein. For that power alone can set bounds to the immaterial thoughts of man, and by their operation control the direction and check the extravagance of his evil propensities.

Dolgorow decided upon his plan. He resolved to concentrate a sufficient body of men in the neighborhood of the castle as a security against all resistance. Then Louis and Bernard were to be invited to come abroad, and unexpectedly seized, gagged and carried away. When they should have penetrated some distance into the forest, Dolgorow purposed to tell them that their fate and that of Feodorowna depended on the preservation of his secret; and with this warning they were to be despatched with the other prisoners to the interior of the country. Only when all this was effectually accomplished, was Feodorowna to be made acquainted with the matter, and then it would be easy to extort from her the promise of secrecy by threatening the lives of the prisoners.

Willhofen was suspected by Dolgorow as an accomplice. He resolved therefore upon getting rid of him also, by selecting him as

the messenger to carry orders for the advance of troops to the neighborhood of the castle, and at the same time convey to the person who held the command of the peasantry a sealed note not to allow Willhofen to return to the castle, but to occupy him otherwise until further instructions.

This well-matured scheme was put into instant execution. He wrote the order, sealed it, rang the bell, and desired James to summon Willhofen to his presence.

"Here is an important despatch, Sola-now," he addressed him. "You must instantly get to horse, and depart with speed. I hold you responsible for its being delivered within three hours at farthest."

The old man bowed in silence, took the packet and went away.

Now Dolgorow had time to reflect. The danger seemed averted, the threatening cloud dispersed. He could not anticipate that his plan was already forestalled before the commencement of its execution.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

BIANCA knew well that she was betrayed, and the manner of it. Jeannette had been sitting at work in the Princess' room. When the light began to fail her, she had moved into a large arm-chair in the embrasure of the window, which was very deep in the thick walls of the castle. There she worked as long as she could see. In the twilight she ceased, and after sitting idle for some time, fell asleep. Suddenly she was awakened by a noise, and, raising her head, she saw a strange light in the room, and detected with astonishment the Count, standing before the opened writing-table of the Princess. Involuntarily the witness of this action, she feared to betray herself; the great silk curtains so covered the window, that she could not easily be perceived. She therefore resolved not to stir, and to pretend to be asleep. Yet she distinctly observed all that Dolgorow was about. She noticed that he departed with great circumspection, noiselessly opening and closing the doors. These circumstances convinced the girl that there was some secret plot in hand involving the Princess, whose late unhappy disagreement with her parents had been all along known to her. She connected these circumstances with what she had overheard at the door and had confided to James. She apprehended that she had endangered the happiness of her mistress by her imprudence. Her conscience smote her, and she at once determined to acquaint

her with all she had seen and heard. With this good design, she was on the point of hastening to the presence of the Princess, when the latter unexpectedly entered the room. Jeannette soon related her story and all that had happened. Bianca had no difficulty in at once comprehending the whole matter; she saw that she was entirely betrayed, and that there was no time to be lost. Instantly she resolved upon speaking with her brother. Jeannette was directed to lock the door, and particularly instructed should any person require admittance into the room, to answer that the Princess was dressing, and that no one could then be permitted to enter. Bianca covered her head with the dress usually worn by her maid-servant, and favored by the darkness of the corridor, hurried away to the quarter of the castle in which were the apartments of Louis and Bernard, and having entered their room, soon made them acquainted with all the particulars. Flight was resolved on that same night. Gregorius she knew would willingly receive her, if they could but succeed in reaching his dwelling before he should himself have commenced his journey hither in obedience to her late invitation. Should this resource fail them, they determined to hazard every peril and endeavor to reach Smolensko, filled although it was with the refuse of the Grand Army, and scarce worthy the name of a place of refuge.

Willhofen, it was determined should be the companion of their flight. He was instructed as to their designs, and promised to keep horses and a sleigh in readiness. For the making of these necessary preparations he had but just left the room, when James met him, and summoned him to the Count. In anticipation of the cause of this sudden summons, he entered the apartment, preserving his undisturbed presence of mind and his accustomed serenity of features. betraying no suspicion, Dolgorow presented him with the despatches, which Willhofen immediately carried over to Bernard's room, where Bianca was still remaining. The letter was opened and Bianca read it, for it was written in Russian. Dolgorow's plan was in a moment laid bare to them.

The necessity of flight was now as apparent as urgent. No time was to be lost—this very hour they must betake themselves to flight. While Willhofen prepared the sleigh and horses, under pretext of getting ready to carry his master's despatches, Bianca returned to her room and made hasty provision for her journey. She could no longer avoid making Jeannette acquainted with her design. The girl was unwilling to leave her mistress, and in tears entreated to be permitted to share the fortunes of her

mistress. Bianca was compelled to consent, inasmuch as she justly dreaded Dolgorow's indignation, upon discovering the girl's participation in the betrayal of his designs. The poor girl therefore was soon deeply engaged in making up her wardrobe, while Bianca occupied herself in collecting her money, jewels, papers and many other valuable matters, all of which were readily enclosed in a case, easily carried, and, if necessary, concealed. Bernard and Louis had in the meantime, by Willhofen's admonition, provided themselves with pistols belonging to the household. Louis went down in the yard, with the design of following Willhofen out of the yard, with the sleigh, as soon as he left it on horseback. Bernard remained to conduct and protect his sister. A signal was to be given from the window to the parties in the yard, indicating that the Princess and her maid were ready.

The nature of the suspense in which Louis stood looking up to Bianca's window, can be better imagined than depicted. The imminent danger of delay, the possibility of being betrayed, the peril of being plunged into the direst misfortunes, contrasted with the brilliant dreams of prospective happiness, converted this suspense into torture, and prolonged each successive second into an hour of agony. At length Bernard stepped with a light to the window, and there suddenly extinguished it. That was the signal agreed upon. Willhofen mounted his horse and rode quickly towards the gate, which he ordered to be opened. Louis followed him with the sleigh; under the gateway and near the great steps, according to agreement, he was to await the descent of Bianca and Bernard, and then, as rapidly as the horses could fly, to follow Willhofen, who galloped on in advance. That they might not be instantly pursued, Willhofen had taken the precaution to collect all the bridles into one bundle, and had thrown them over a ruined part of the wall into the ditch of the castle; which, it is true, was frozen, but where nobody would think of looking for such articles. They therefore entertained a reasonable expectation that before dawn it would be difficult to pursue them. Darkness favored the undertaking. With great care, so that no one might hear the tramping of the horses upon the snow, Louis brought the sleigh to the gateway. Willhofen was already outside, remaining on the bridge. By the obscure glimmer of the lamp that hung in the vaulted arch-way, Louis saw three forms upon the upper steps of the staircase.

"Is it thou Bernard?" he whispered.

"Here we are," was the answer, and at the same instant Bianca approached to enter the sleigh,

But at this moment was heard Dolgorow's fearful shout :

" Treachery ! Ho ! there—awake ! Shut the gate—seize the traitors !" he cried. At the same instant a drawn sword flashed above Bernard's head, and, under the suddenness of the blow, he fell to the ground.

Bianca uttered a piercing shriek, and in falling, struck Dolgorow's arm, which was about to deal a second and a heavier stroke.

" For the mercy of Heaven, spare him !—he is my brother !" she exclaimed, in a tone calculated to pierce the stoutest heart.

Louis was astounded ; but, quickly recovering himself, he jumped from the sleigh, tore the pistol out of his girdle, and discharged it at Dolgorow. The ball penetrated the shoulder, and he tottered backward.

" Fly, unhappy lady !—fly !" exclaimed Louis, and would have embraced Bianca ; but already, three servants, who had been dozing in the guard-room, near the gate, hastened to the scene, and seizing him behind, threw him to the ground.

" Seize the traitors !—bind them !" exclaimed Dolgorow furiously, and the servants, momentarily increasing their numbers, soon overpowered the unfortunate and unaided young man. Dolgorow himself grasped Bianca, lifted her up by force, and bore her away, as she struggled, up the stairs, into the hall of the castle. Her strength failed her, under her terrible misfortune, and all resistance was soon at an end, as indeed it was vain.

Jeannette followed her mistress. The servants, without waiting for further instructions, dragged the unconscious Bernard along with them, and followed the retreating steps of the Count.

In the upper corridor the Countess met them, having been alarmed by the discharge of fire-arms and the general tumult, without knowing the cause.

" Take your daughter to your apartment, Countess !" exclaimed Dolgorow. " The honor of our house is in the greatest jeopardy !"

" I am not your daughter !" exclaimed Feodorowna, whose consciousness had returned. " I no longer acknowledge your rights. You have murdered my brother !"

With great energy she wrenched herself from the arms of the Count, and hastened back to meet the servants, who were dragging along Bernard and Louis.

" You are my vassals," she addressed them, in a tone of excited despair : " I command you to release these unfortunate men, and to lend immediate aid to the wounded !"

Dolgorow had hastened after her.

" Whoever neglects to obey my commands," he exclaimed, with his sword raised on high, and in a voice of thunder, " I will cleave his

traitorous skull ! Who dares dispute my orders, or brave my vengeance ?"

The serfs of the Princess stood irresolute, wavering between fear and the impulse of conscious duty ; but, two of Dolgorow's own men bowed humbly before him, saying :

" Our master has only to command us, and we shall know what to do."

" I have told you already," cried Dolgorow, in towering wrath. " Bind these dogs, and cast them into the deepest vault of the castle !"

" No—it shall not be !—it is impossible !" Bianca exclaimed, clasping her brother within her arms, and pressing his blood-stained head to her breast. " I do not leave thee, my brother !—if thou diest, thou diest in my arms !"

Struck with respect for her sorrows, even the rough serfs retreated, seeming to feel a higher duty than that of a slavish obedience.

Dolgorow stamped with his foot, and cursed them in his anger.

" Throw her down also, if she will not leave him !" he fiercely exclaimed, stepping himself towards his unhappy victim, for the purpose of tearing her from the body of her brother.

Louis' feelings were tortured with ineffable pangs at sight of this brutal enormity. Under this emotion, he forced himself upright amid the ignorant slaves who held him, and, in the dignity of his virtuous indignation, addressed the savage noble before him :

" Hold thine hand, Count ! Dost thou not fear the retribution of Heaven ? The Great Judge sees all, and from his justice thou canst not escape !"

Dolgorow turned himself proudly round. He was struck, for even he felt the promptings of the monitor within. Yet, his long-continued hardness of heart struggled against the emotion, as against a cowardly fear, and he endeavored to conceal his weakness behind the veil of redoubled insolence. A smile of scorn was on the lips that replied :

" It shall be mine to show you that you will find it still more difficult to escape *my* wrath and *my* justice !"

At this moment was suddenly heard a strange hollow noise, succeeded by a loud clamor of confused voices.

The attention of all was arrested. They heard the noise approaching.

" What's the matter there ?" exclaimed Dolgorow. " Go down, one of you, and see what is the cause of this tumult."

One of his men was in the act of obeying these instructions, when louder and more distinct noises were heard, as of a body of men forcing their way up the stairs. The vaulted roof reflected a strong light from below, and clearly indicated the approach of people with torches.

Dolgorow, in evident alarm, hastened to

wards the stairs. The cry and tumult of those forcing their way up increased every moment.

"Here! here!" exclaimed a strong voice, "follow me!"

Louis recognised Willhofen's voice. In an instant, a bright hope that this faithful man would bring succor, arose within him. This hope received its confirmation in the echo of a shot, immediately succeeded by a second discharge, and a furious outburst of human voices.

Dolgorow, against whose person these shots had been fired, made a speedy retreat. He held his hand to his side, where he seemed to have been wounded; but he continued resolutely to brandish his sword, and encourage his men to resist the attack. They were unarmed and hesitated.

"Fight, villains! or I myself will cut you down!" Dolgorow roared, alike against his own people and his unknown assailants. He stormed in fury, and the vaulted hall reechoed with his indignant epithets.

The frightened slaves relinquished their hold of Louis and Bernard, and hastened to their master. Suddenly, a strange light illuminated the whole apartment, and Louis at once recognised the faithful Willhofen, who, with a sword in his right hand and a blazing torch in his left, appeared at the top of the stairs. He rushed impetuously forward, followed by a crowd of people, armed with poles and implements of husbandry. They hesitated not in their bold advance, and unchecked, they fell furiously upon the Count and his people. Dolgorow's men were unable to withstand the impetuous assault—they turned and fled along the corridor. Dolgorow would have stood firm, but he was carried away by the flying mass, and fell to the ground. The assailants still pressed forward, and, before Louis could well recover from his surprise, Willhofen seized his hand, and triumphantly exclaimed,

"We are safe, sir!"

Louis, in the excess of his joy, embraced the old man, and hailed him as their deliverer.

Bianca knelt on the ground; the head of her wounded brother lay in her lap. She spread her hands over his pale and blood-stained face;—her trembling lips were not able to utter a word, yet, in her uplifted eye glowed a flame of purest gratitude for this merciful interposition.

"Dear brother! only once again open thine eyes!" she murmured, and essayed to raise his fallen head. His consciousness happily began to return; he opened his eyes, and lisped,

"Where am I?"

"In the arms of thy sister!" Bianca exclaimed, with re-awakened joy.

Louis had bent down beside her, to assist her in raising the exhausted patient. He carefully wiped away the blood from his forehead, and made anxious and tender inquiries into the nature and extent of the wounds.

"I feel easy," said Bernard, "but exceeding weak and confused. What has happened here?—where are we?"

His friend and his sister led him on to his apartment. Here Bianca herself washed his wound, and secured it with a bandage. Willhofen also now entered, and Louis pointed to him, exclaiming:

"This is our preserver!—but how he became so he has not yet explained to us."

"I scarce know myself," replied Willhofen. "I remained upon the bridge, waiting for you, my dear sir, when I suddenly heard a loud cry, and immediately afterwards the report of a pistol-shot. Turning in that direction, I saw the people rushing out of the guard-room towards the sleigh. Now I knew but too well what was the matter. Irresolute whether to fly or to remain, I stood a silent spectator of the tumult. But, when the men had carried all up stairs, and the gateway was clear, it suddenly occurred to me that the French prisoners might aid us. I lost no time in proceeding to the yard. The man who stood on guard at the gate, with a rusty musket, was not aware of an attack. To jump from my horse, to throw him down, to snatch his musket out of his hand, and put it out of his power to give the alarm, was the work of an instant. I had but to draw back the bolts of the outer door, and turn the key in the lock of the inner, and the prisoners were free. The little French I learned in my youth now stood me in good stead. I soon made them comprehend, that if they had the courage to try, they might effect their deliverance. There was no necessity to repeat the proposal. They followed me into the yard. When I had them in the open air, I led them to a heap of billet-wood, that lies immediately to the right, in the corner, and directed them to arm and follow me immediately to the gate. In the meantime, I had closed the outer gate, so that the fellows might not prematurely make their escape into the woods, and leave us to fight our own battle. I tore a burning brand out of the stove in the guard-room, and others followed my example. I led the way up the stairs, and with a wild cry, the Frenchmen were close at my back, eager for the fray, and—but the rest you know. Now we are masters of the castle; but we shall do wisely in getting away from it this very hour; for, no man knows what the next will bring forth."

"Brave old man!" exclaimed Bernard, "Thou art still a true German, even amid the deserts of Russia. I feel new life, my

friends ; let us hasten to gain the open air."

"The horses are yet harnessed," answered Willhofen ; "we can instantly depart. But bark ! what is that ?"

There was a loud knock at the gate without, accompanied by the crack of a whip, and the ringing of sleigh bells. This interruption caused a momentary alarm.

"Be quiet—we will soon see what it is," said Willhofen ; "if there are many of them, we can keep them out. Against a few we can easily maintain our position—for our enemies here are now harmless." With this brief remark, he went out to observe the new visitor from one of the front windows.

It was not long before he returned with a smile.

"There is no danger, gracious lady," said he ; "it is Father Gregorius!"

"Heaven itself has sent him to me !" exclaimed Bianca. "Oh, the kind old man ! setting at naught, both night and winter, in his zeal to comply with my urgent request. Open the gate—quick—no, I myself will go to meet him."

She hastened down so rapidly that Willhofen was scarcely able to follow her. After a few minutes she returned by the side of the old man, to whom she was as dearly attached as a daughter to her parent.

"See, Father—here he is—it is my brother!"

Bernard reverently stood up, for Gregorius' facial aspect was that of a saint. A blessed calm seemed to overspread his features ; and his eye was bright with the ray of adoration habitually directed to the Almighty.

"Thus, wonderfully does He, whose ways are inscrutable, direct us in our paths !" said the old priest, as he stood before them : "thus does He fashion the destinies of men on invisible threads which He alone is able to blend or disrupt. Thou hast my blessing, my son," he continued approaching Bernard, and laying his hand on his head ; "and may that of Heaven rest upon thee. Even now the Father of Mercies is with thee—even here where his ministers of wrath are pouring out retributive justice upon the heads of our invaders—even here, where the wilderness of snow and the sharp arrow of the icy North wind, are preparing destruction for myriads of infidel transgressors—here has He preserved to thee alone this tender blossom, which He now transfers to thy care and protection and love. Thou camest with the sword, but the angel of the Lord hath wrested it from thine hand, and in lieu thereof placed a palm !"

"I receive it with all reverence and gratitude !" answered Bernard, bending in humility over the hand of the priest.

"Oh, Father!" said Bianca, in a tone of

supplication. "Thou shouldst be the peacemaker ; thy pious words should cleanse the heart of man from the hatred and blood-thirstiness that stain it. It is mine now, to relinquish the older ties with which I have hitherto been bound to this family, and to follow a holier duty—to obey a mightier power. I would have done this work kindly and gradually, if possible ; but enmity has arisen, and peril imposes the necessity of haste. Be thou the mediator between me and my foster-parents ; I do not deserve their hatred, but even an unjust curse would pain me through the remainder of my days. Where is my father ? Where is my mother ? I wish earnestly to see them !"

"They are under guard in the saloon !" answered Willhofen.

"Then we will go to them," said Bianca, earnestly. "Brother, wilt thou be able to accompany me ? Louis, wilt thou also follow me ? Soften your hearts for a work of reconciliation !"

"What heart can resist so benevolent a prayer ?" said Louis. "The most obdurate resentment, if indeed I could entertain it, would melt like snow under the genial breath of spring."

Bernard seized her hand, and softly pressing it, whispered :

"I am resolute and inflexible by nature ; the demon of evil is powerful within me. But, sister, one hair of thy silken lashes may lead me whithersoever thou wilt, and bind me more effectually than a ten-linked chain of iron. Let us go."

In the saloon they found Dolgorow. His brow was clouded—he was pale with passion and bodily pain. The Countess sat in an arm-chair, exhausted and in tears.

"What do you desire ?—So you also are one of the conspirators, Gregorius ! You, too, have apostatised from your allegiance to your country and your God ?"

The old man heeded not the insult offered by the angry Count, but kindly approached him, and mildly said :

"Indulge no words of hatred or anger in this hour, when the eternal Disposer of human affairs is looking down upon you with an eye of stern displeasure. Utter no words of enmity now, when we approach you with love ! You once broke and cast from you the holy ties of our nature ; but the eye of God was not asleep—and he has again brought those together who should never have been separated. Do not harbor resentment against those who bear no guilt—compensate for a cruel course by a repentant act. She who has so long called you father is about to leave you—a newer and holier duty calls her away—but let her not depart without a reconciliation and your blessing !"

Dolgorow was silent; he moodily turned away his head.

"Father! mother!" said Bianca, in a tremulous voice, and hesitating to approach them: "I cannot easily forget those endeared names, first learned from, and long applied to you. I suffered much indeed, but I enjoyed much also; therefore can I never forget the sacred claims of gratitude. To be compelled to leave you is painful enough, but here I must now have been always a stranger. No custom—no long preserved habits of life, erase the instincts of nature, or reconcile us to error. Oh, my parents! let not this parting be in violence or anger. Spare me and yourselves agony, which we can escape only by wise and humble submission! Let us separate in peace!"

Bianca, as a suppliant, approached the Countess, and seized her hand which hung motionless by her side.

"Have I ever neglected my duty as a child towards you, my mother? Even the most painful sacrifice I could offer to parental authority, was offered in silence—a silence the more impressive, as I knew that such a sacrifice was beyond the just power of parents to exact. A ruling Providence rid me of my fetters even before their embrace could insult my person. Recognise in this the merciful dispensation of the Almighty! Bow to His will, and look with approval upon what you can no longer prevent or change. That, at least, may prove some compensation to me for the hours of unforgotten misery I endured in obedience to your will, when I relinquished all my hopes of life!"

The Countess turned aside, unmoved by these entreaties, yet unable to control her tears. Her tears were for herself.—Dolgorow stood apart, cold and inflexible.

Bianca was in despair, distressed beyond measure.

"Oh, Father Gregorius!" said she, "let but your solemn voice be once lifted up in serious exhortation—if they will but hear the voice of man, surely thine will prevail. Alas! they will not hear their daughter!"

The old man approached the Countess, but equally addressed both her and Dolgorow:

"Love your enemies; do good to those that hate you—is enjoined on man in Holy Writ—and the Lord requires obedience at our hands!" began the aged minister. "You have but to fulfil a lesser duty—to recompence love with love—to abstain from inflicting pain where there is no demerit. This is a law, which the savage observes towards the savage. Look forward to the mercy you will yourself require in your last hour—that hour, sooner or later, must come; and can you say that it is not even now at hand. I

exhort you by the love borne to all of us by the blessed Redeemer; remember his mercies, and be yourself merciful, ere you perish in the hardness of your heart!"

"Enough!" exclaimed Dolgorow, furiously starting forward. "You have become an apostate priest and counsellor of the enemy! What want you now from me? I am your prisoner. Will the Princess Ochalskoi, a daughter of Russia, suffer the Count Dolgorow, her father, the defender of her country, to be fettered by traitors? She has succeeded in her designs—let her now farther determine!"

"Merciful heaven! this is too much!" exclaimed Bianca, concealing her head in Gregorius' robe. The old man supported her trembling frame.

"Sister, come, or I shall be released from the promise I have given!" said Bernard, whose resentment was kindling against the prisoner.

Louis stepped forward with noble bearing and confronted Dolgorow.

"Can you really dare thus to defy the Great Judge, not of your deeds alone, but your very thoughts? Cease, at least, to torture a noble spirit, and a pure being with unworthy slander and insult. No one that hears you here can be deceived by any falsehood that you can utter."

Dolgorow did not answer.

Gregorius raised his hands to heaven, and poured forth a solemn prayer:

"Heavenly Father!—give to this, thy innocent daughter, thy grace and blessing. She is weak and innocent before thee!"

After this he laid his hands on Bianca's head:

"Receive the blessing of the Lord! His mighty arm shall lift itself over thee, protecting thee against the wrath of the wicked! And albeit thy true parents should pronounce a curse upon thee, yet that should harmlessly pass, seeing that the shield of the Lord is spread above thine head. Depart in peace, whithersoever the sacred affections of thine own pure heart doth lead thee. Guiltless art thou, and so shall the fulness of joy reserved for the faithful, await thy coming years."

Having pronounced this benediction, the aged priest turned to leave the saloon. Bianca endeavored to follow him, but required the aid of Bernard and Louis to support her steps.

Willhofen met them at the gate:

"Let me entreat you, dear sir, make haste into the sleigh; we have no time to spare—we must be away. Wrap yourselves up warm, for the night is bitterly cold. I am ready to conduct you on horseback, for I must ride to keep myself warm."

Louis followed the advice of his honest friend. He assisted Bernard in placing his sister in the sleigh, and then took his seat on the part designed for the driver, and once more took the reins into his hand.

Bianca took care of her brother, who still felt himself weak from the loss of blood, and whose wound became more painfully affected by the piercing nature of the cold. As a greater amount of room was requisite for the accommodation of Bernard, Bianca's waiting-maid was transferred to the care of Father Gregorius, who took her into his own sleigh.

Willhofen had, in the meantime, collected the captive Frenchmen, who, without loss of time, provided themselves with the clothing, victuals, and arms which were to be found in the castle. Taking aside their commander, a young officer, he suggested to him the best course for him to pursue.

"Follow the track of the sleighs," he said, "until you come to three great firs, near which stands a sign-post. Here, if you should see the track of the sleigh turning to the left, turn to the right, for by that road you will reach Smolensko in two hours. The night is starlight, and with the aid of the snow you will get along safely. The Countess had better remain in the castle, but take the Count along with you as a hostage, in case any Russian peasants or Cossacks should meet you on the way. I will answer for their not injuring a hair of your heads, if his life depends on it. And if you follow my advice, you will allow him to return uninjured, as soon as you shall reach the city, for it is not advisable to tempt the vengeance of his enemies; and moreover, if you allow him to return in peace, it may be of service to you at some future day. But, at all events, hasten to leave the castle immediately, for here you are not safe for an hour against unexpected guests. If you desire to obtain horses, there are yet several in the stables, but the bridles are lying in the castle ditch behind the old wall. And now, farewell!"

The old man sprang upon his horse and galloped forth from the castle gate. The two sleighs followed at full speed. Soon afterwards the delivered prisoners commenced their march, taking their hostage, Dolgorow, in their midst. They left the castle in a compact and orderly body.

Once only Bianca turned her head. When the towers of the castle vanished at length from her sight, she breathed more freely and composedly. The dark forest veiled her within its solemn shades; she bent down her lovely head upon the bosom of her brother, and found relief in tears, such as joy, rather than sorrow, is wont to pour forth.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

BEFORE dawn of day, Rasinski, at the head of the brave fellows who yet remained of his regiment, and occupying the centre of the columns formed by Marshal Ney's departing divisions, left the encircling walls of Smolensko. The sky was overcast; not a star was visible through its dark canopy. The only light which, in some measure, relieved the darkness, was the feeble reflection of the mantle of snow which covered the fields. Surrounding nature was sad and silent; the rumbling of the few field-pieces which could yet be brought away on their carriages, and the clatter of arms, were the only sounds which broke upon the ear in this oppressive silence; for the soldiers uttered not a word, but plodded noiselessly, and brooding, through this wilderness of wintry desolation.

After an hour's march, these warriors, the last in retreat from inhospitable Russia, reached a dense forest of fir-trees. Suddenly a hollow crash was heard in the rear, and, at the same time, the reflection of a strong light shone upon the tops of the old trees. Every one looked up in listening attention, for they believed, at first, that what they heard was the discharge of the enemy's artillery.

"It is nothing," said Rasinski to Jaromir, who rode by his side; "they are blowing up the walls and towers of the fortifications. It is the old prerogative of war to leave nothing to the enemy of which we cannot keep possession ourselves."

The dull, heavy reports continued yet some time longer. Day began to break. Gradually the lines of marching troops and trains of wagons became visible.

"Keep a good look-out on the men, Jaromir," said Rasinski; "I will go to ascertain how it fares with our sick and wounded."

Having said this, he rode along the line to the wagons on which were carried the wounded of whose lives and recovery hopes were still entertained. All others had, from necessity, been resigned to the tender mercies of the enemy.

Boleslaus, wounded by a shot in the side, but not dangerously, lay with others of the regiment on a wagon procured through the untiring efforts of Rasinski.

"Well, how do you get along, friends?" Rasinski asked his men, extending his hand to Boleslaus.

"As well as we can," answered the young officer, sitting pale and anxious, with his face deeply hidden in his cloak, while his head was tied around with a black silk-handkerchief to protect it from the cold

"Have you been able to learn anything, Colonel?"

"It was all in vain," answered Rasinski, sadly. "This insatiable war, which has already devoured so many brave and noble fellows, craved these also for his prey! I would not complain if they were of our own people! I would have consoled myself with the thought that they had fallen in their country's cause; the battle was a cast of the die with them; they hazarded life and limb upon it, like the rest of us. To one, the die turns up the grim tyrant, death; to another, the pleasures of life. We are prepared for either—we know what is before us, and must not murmur. But these our friends!—they did not join us and come hither from choice! War, which wields a trenchant sword over every other head, ought to have covered them with its broad ægis! Alas! this all-devouring wretchedness and terror has swallowed them up too. It must be borne and surmounted, Boleslaus; for we are men, and not children."

"Who can tell," answered Boleslaus, sorrowfully, "how soon we may join them!"

"There is nothing I more desire," replied Rasinski, misunderstanding his meaning.

"I mean that here death does not suffer compades to be long separated," said the young man, slowly shaking his head, and turning his large black eyes, first, on the miserable objects around him, and then into the distance, as if contrasting the expiring energies of these sufferers with the unbounded space which they would have to traverse before arriving at the delectable spots of their home.

"Dost thou mean it so?—then certainly thou art right," answered Rasinski. "Art thou so weakened by thy wound that it reminds thee of dying?"

"No," answered Boleslaus; "I feel better. Perhaps I may be able to mount my horse again in a few days. Even to-day I could walk or ride a short distance."

"Well, then, farewell!" said Rasinski, quickly, and well-nigh harshly, fearing to let his feelings overcome him; "I will not forget to attend to you, comrades," he added, turning to the rest of the invalids, and then setting spurs to his horse, he hastened back to Jaromir.

Boleslaus, whose serious and reserved character possessed a keener sensibility than he was accustomed to manifest, was very deeply affected by the loss of Bernard and Louis. There was hardly room for any other conjecture than that they were dead; for as they must have learned that Rasinski had been suddenly ordered to unite himself, with his regiment, to Ney's corps, they must certainly have endeavored to join him, or

at least would have tarried for him at Smolensko. There were still many in the city who would have given them information, Colonel Regnard among others, who, with the Viceroy of Italy, was the first to leave the fort, when Rasinski and his men had already entered it. But to no one had they applied; no one had perceived a trace of them. If they had departed in advance, or if an opportunity of reaching their home by a more direct or easier route had presented itself, they would infallibly have taken care to impart such a movement to Regnard, and through him to Rasinski. The real truth of their fate was unknown to all, and thus they were reckoned among the vast number of those who were daily found missing from the ranks.

Rasinski bore the afflicting loss with that manly fortitude with which he rose above even the heaviest blows of adversity; Jaromir, in his disturbed mood, envied those who were delivered from the galling load of life; while Boleslaus suffered the keenest sympathy of a devoted brother.

Thus he now sat sunk in mournful reverie, while his eye wandered over the moving troops and train of wagons which, in the grey morning, were almost lost to view. The road passed over an elevation, which, in its declivity, was coated over with ice, so that the weak and tired animals were unable to pull up the trifling ascent, notwithstanding the exertions of the drivers, with the aid of their whips and curses. The wagons and guns were thus stopped in their progress, and while the horse and infantry passed on, they remained behind. After a while, however, they all succeeded in surmounting the impediment, which, to each successive wagon or gun-carriage, became less formidable, as the ice was broken up by its predecessor, and of course became less slippery. The last vehicles had nearly gained the highest part of the ridge, and Boleslaus was on one of these, when one, overladen with women and baggage, in spite of all the efforts of horses and drivers, was unable to come up. Those behind cursed and raved, insisting that the cart should be left behind. They would have driven by, but in passing over, the most level part had at once been selected by the foremost wagon, and every attempt to reach the summit by another path would have been far more difficult, if not impossible. In this way two wretched horses strained every muscle and sinew to scramble up the slippery ascent, but in vain; equally fruitless was it to seek help from the men, as there were none but sick and wounded, and the drivers themselves belonged to the same category. At last the two poor animals, when half-way up the hill,

fell down exhausted, and not being able any longer to hold the wagon back, it began a retrograde motion, dragging the horses along with it. A cry of terror and dismay arose at this sight, as well from those in the vehicle itself, as from those whom it threatened behind. But there was no one in real danger but the former, for the wagon slid down sideways; one of the wheels sunk into a deep gully; the other struck against a block of ice, and the wagon was overturned with a great crash.

By their own troubles and need of deliverance, the feelings of these people had become so blunted and torpid, that those behind manifested more satisfaction that the object was out of the way, than they did pity for the fate of their sick comrades and the helpless women scattered on the road. These had, however, quickly gathered themselves up again, and seeing their conveyance perfectly useless, they hastened, with their traps and little property in their arms, towards the nearest wagons, to seek for places there; but they were, for the most part, roughly repulsed.

When Boleslaus saw wounded soldiers and women driven back with savage bitterness by the whips of the drivers, he was cut to the heart. He raised himself and cried out:

"Friends, don't leave your comrades behind! Come here, old man!" he cried to an old grenadier, severely wounded; "come here, we will take you up, and one of us can go on foot by turns. I will be the first myself to try it."

So saying, he reached out his arms to the aged warrior to help him into the wagon, while he got down himself.

This example had a good effect. It was resolved to take one of the wounded into each wagon. But there were not as many wagons as there were claimants, and a young woman, closely enveloped in a fur cloak, and with a child about three years of age in her arms, and apparently the wife of some officer, was repulsed everywhere, while her two companions had already found places.

Shall the mother perish in this desert, on account of her child? thought Boleslaus, a shudder passing over him the while. But a deeper horror came over him, when he saw the unfortunate woman suddenly fling down the child into the snow-bank, and thus freed from her encumbrance, run to the next wagon:*

* At the gates of the town (Smolensko) an infamous act struck all witnesses with a horror that still survives. A mother abandoned her son, a child of five years old; in spite of his cries and tears she repulsed him from her overloaded sledge, wildly exclaiming that "he had not seen France!—he would not regret it! But as to her, she knew France!—she must see her country

"Take me alone, then!" she cried, in tones of heart-rending anguish; "you will at least save one life?"

This unnatural conduct of the mother filled even these men, hardened as they were to every misery incidental to war, with a feeling of horror and disgust. Boleslaus ran to the crying child, which was nearly smothered in the deep snow, and took it up. But how did his heart quiver, when, in that little creature, he recognised the foster-child of Alisette; and herself, in the pitifully insane suppliant begging to be saved.

"Almighty God!" he cried, horror-struck, this is the hand of retribution!"

All feeling of pity and commiseration was banished from the men by this act of the wretched woman. A rude feeling of pleasure even at having it in their power immediately to avenge such an outrage, usurped its place in their breasts.

"Give us the child, we will save the poor innocent," cried a chasseur from the wagon into which Alisette had made a fruitless attempt to climb, while at the same time he drove back the unhappy women with heavy blows of his fist. Boleslaus obeyed the call, hardly knowing what he did. The chasseur reached out his hands towards him, lifted the little creature into the wagon, and the uncouth bearded warrior took it in his arms, and kissed and caressed it with great affection. In the meantime Alisette had rushed to the next wagon, endeavoring by tears and wringing of hands to move the people there to compassion. But indignation had hardened every heart against her, and a grey-headed sergeant cried out to her in harsh accents: "Away with you, wretch! you may run on foot through the snow!"

"Oh! have pity on my youth," whined Alisette, throwing herself on her knees and wringing her hands.

Boleslaus now approached, touched her on the shoulder, and said earnestly yet mildly: "Compose yourself, Alisette; you must bear your fate patiently. The trial must be endured and conquered; I will assist you as far as I am able."

The unhappy woman, still on her knees, had been looking at him with half-insane eyes, during these words; it was not till he had finished speaking that she seemed to recognise him.

"Oh, in happier days you could sue so humbly for a song! And now you are wil-

again!" Twice did Ney have the poor child replaced in its mother's arms; thrice she threw it upon the frozen snow. But amongst a thousand instances of sublime and tender devotedness, this solitary crime was not left unpunished. This unnatural parent was herself abandoned upon the snow, whence her victim was raised and confided to another mother. At the Beresina, at Wilna, and Kowno, the orphan was seen, and he finally escaped all the horrors of the retreat—*Segur*

ling to give me over a prey to nameless torture ! I shall perish in this wilderness !"

On saying this, she sprang up, rushed violently to the wagon, where the child sat trembling, clinging to the breast of the old yager ; and before any one was aware what was her intention, she snatched the child away, and the second time threw the innocent creature in the snow, crying, " Let it lie there ; it does not yet know how sweet is life—how terrible death appears in this place ; but save me ; I know how beautiful this world is, for I have seen happier days !"

With these words she made a convulsive effort to fasten herself upon the wagon, not even heeding the hard knocks and blows dealt her from the hand of the chasseur.

" Away, reptile !" he cried in exasperation ; " away, viper ! Whoever takes you up would call down the wrath of God upon himself. Let the wolves tear thee to pieces here, thou worse than she-wolf !"

At the same time, assisted by the others, he violently wrenched away her hard-clutching hands, and flung her back, so that she fell stunned on the ground.

Boleslaus had in the meantime again taken the child into his arms, bleeding as it was from its violent fall, and handed it over to the old soldier. When he then beheld Aliette lying prostrate, her hair flying loose, and her wandering eye and trembling hands feebly directed towards heaven, her misery seemed to him greater than the enormity of her crime. He went to her, and raised her from the ground. When in some measure she recovered from her stupefaction and became aware that again it was Boleslaus who with manly kindness told her to be calm, she threw herself in an agony of despair before him, embraced his knees, and exclaimed :

" You *must* save me ! You cannot give me up to these horrors ! I will not leave you until you swear to save me !

She clasped his feet so tightly, that weak as he was from his wound, he was unable to extricate himself. It was in vain that he cried to her to compose herself and arise ; in her phrensy she did not hear a word he said. Meanwhile the wagons began to move onwards again ; two had ascended the slippery ridge ; that to which Boleslaus belonged was just following to encounter the same difficulties ; four only were behind, and were stationary. It was high time for those who out of kindness and pity had volunteered to take turns in walking, to be on their way. Five or six of these men had gathered around Boleslaus, partly to be near the officer, which always inspires confidence, as being a more distinguished station, and partly attracted by the scene going forward. On perceiving

that he was unable to tear himself from the unfortunate woman who held him firmly fettered, they tore her by force away from him, and threw her back into the snow.

" Push on, Lieutenant !" cried a young soldier ; " forward, or we will be left. The lady has a good pair of legs ; she can get along better than we."

On this the young soldier took hold of him on one side, and a dragoon on the other, and so they carried him away between them. In his weakened state, this exciting scene, which had in so many ways roused his feelings, so affected him, that he could scarcely stand erect. Yet he turned around once more, and cried out to Aliette, now entirely giving way to despair :

" Muster all your courage, unhappy woman, and as you value life, try what you can do !"

But she was deaf to these counsels of reason, which required calmness, patience and resolution, sentiments which found no place in a heart dead to all but waywardness and indulgence. She had witnessed the increasing horrors of this war from day to day, with a feeling of boding dread ; but deceived and rendered callous by her infatuation, her eyes had been firmly closed against the possibility of so shocking a fate ever befalling her. She had been accustomed to regard it as such an unheard-of stroke of fortune, that now, when the hour had come, she lost all power and self-possession. Nothing would have been lost, had she not seen utter destruction already in the mere necessity, hard enough it is true, to meet great privations. Thus she worked out her own ruin. In considering what she must relinquish, she lost all remembrance of what still was left to her ; the awful retribution of an immoral and vitiated nature, which covets only to enjoy life merely for enjoyment's sake, and employs every faculty and means for that end alone, now descended upon her devoted head with overwhelming force. She was utterly unprepared to meet days of severe endurance ; she shrunk before them in utter hopelessness, unprepared for the smallest exertion. It was not till the last wagon was put in motion, and the horses, amidst loud cries and heavy blows, were crawling up the icy acclivity, or straining every fibre in their bodies—not till she was seized with the dreadful certainty of being left utterly alone, that she rushed like a maniac with her dishevelled hair streaming about face and shoulders, after the departing vehicle. In her phrensy she endeavored to cling to the last wagon, but the men, who already feared that the horses would not be able to overcome the difficulty, thrust at her with their swords and bayonets, inflicting several wounds and

severe contusions. Impelled by mortal anguish, she now laid hold of the hind-wheel of the wagon, which from the frozen snow with which it was clogged had ceased to turn round, and thus let herself be dragged along. But as this very much increased the load for the weak and weary animals, a wounded cuirassier, who was lying in the wagon, drew his pistol and threatened to shoot her down, unless she let go her hold. Her hands, paralyzed by this new and sudden terror, sank powerless to her side, and she sank moaning in the road. It was thus that Boleslaus saw her as he threw a last look after her; he struggled irresolutely with himself, whether to return to her once more, but the soldiers pulled him onward by main strength, while the young soldier who had spoken before, cried:

"Let her alone; a mother who would murder her child is thus justly punished!"

At Korithnia the retreating army was overtaken by night; some went into bivouac, others established themselves in the ruined houses of the little place. Rasinski, as usual, had through his indefatigable activity procured such accommodations for his people as, under the circumstances, to make their lot not an unenviable one.

But they had not had time to establish themselves by their camp-fires, when a shower of balls flew over their heads.

"We are attacked!" cried Rasinski, springing up: "to arms! quick! to horse!"

In a moment he was himself on horseback, and had already begun putting his men in order, when Marshal Ney came towards him at full gallop, and cried out:

"Colonel, reconnoitre the left flank of the camp with your men, and report to me instantly on falling in with the enemy."

The Marshal spurred on into the midst of the camp, collecting and arranging the surprised troops. Rasinski, at the head of his few but resolute followers, rode forward in the darkness, in order to seek out the enemy who had announced their presence in so formidable a manner. It appeared strange that they had but once discharged their guns and then observed complete silence; but the fighting in this retreat, through darkness, forests, and impassable deserts of snow, was so replete with extraordinary occurrences, that every day and every night developed some new and unheard-of trait in the history of this war.

Rasinski thought that he discovered some dark-looking masses on a height close by the camp, as if lying on the snow.

"Is that brushwood or is it people?" he inquired, turning to Jaromir.

"Nothing is to be distinctly seen yet," answered the latter.

"In God's name, let us up to it then!" returned Rasinski, riding nearer. But the ground soon shelved down with an abrupt pitch which they could not descend on horseback, and which compelled them to follow along the steep edge. Suddenly, like a frightened flock of birds, fifteen or twenty Cossacks hurried away from a corner of the hollow, and on their small, nimble horses galloped up the other side, which was not so steep. Rasinski commanded his men to fire,—more to scare than hurt the enemy. They fled hastily across the field, and were soon lost in darkness. In a few minutes those large masses on the white snow also were in motion, and it became evident that it was a pretty large detachment of Cossacks, who now retreated, being warned of the enemy's approach by the flight of the first few, and by the firing.

Cautiously Rasinski led his men down a less dangerous path. He now speedily discovered the cause of the noise, which they had taken for a discharge of artillery. They encountered a number of field-pieces with their tumbrils attached, filled with ammunition, but the guns were spiked, having been left behind for want of means of conveyance. A little farther back they found guns and ammunition-wagons blown up. Probably the Cossacks just seen had set fire to several of these wagons, and were prevented only by the irruption of Rasinski from blowing up the whole.

Rasinski was glad to detect the true cause of the alarm, and wished therefore to return quickly, so as to report to the marshal. But as he rode along through the hollow, he saw a man about thirty paces before him, running at full speed along the edge of the hill. Thinking that it was a Russian, he called out in that language, commanding him to stop. The fugitive seemed struck aback, but again vigorously pursued his course. The hill being of easy ascent at this place, Rasinski and Jaromir spurred on after him, followed by two troopers, so as not to suffer a man to escape, who might communicate important information about the strength and distance of the enemy. He fled with all his powers, but sank at length, exhausted, in the deep snow, and was seized by his pursuers. To the great astonishment of Rasinski, the prisoner, in surrendering, cried out: "Does any one among you speak French?"

"The devil! I should know that voice," answered Rasinski, in French. "Who are you?"

"Rasinski, is that you?—is it possible?" cried the prisoner, joyfully extending his arms towards him. "I am Regnard; do you not know me?"

"Regnard! how in God's name came you here?" asked Rasinski in glad surprise.

"The tale is short and clear, but not very edifying," answered Regnard; "and you shall hear it more circumstantially than will please you; but in the meantime I advise you not to tarry hereabouts, but to seek a safer place, if one is to be found. There are more Russians in this vicinity than there are trees in the forest. But where do you come from?"

"With Marshal Ney from Smolensko," answered Rasinski; "our bivouac is not five hundred yards from here."

"Then let us make haste to get to it. I will tell you all as we go along."

Jaromir offered the Colonel his horse, which he declined, but walked between him and Rasinski rapidly towards the bivouac.

"You know," he began, "that I marched out of Smolensko with the Viceroy. Yesterday we were attacked by the Russians, about three hours' march from here, and I was taken prisoner. The Cossacks drove me before them with their knouts, or *caust-chous*, until I found a Russian general, to whom I cried out in French, to save me from such infamous treatment. But the brute only set up a loud laugh, saying that the knout of the Cossacks makes as little distinction between the rank and condition of a soldier as the cannon-balls do; and that consequently I must rest satisfied.

Rasinski ground his teeth with indignation. "These savages," he cried, "who themselves are kept under by the law of the lash, certainly cannot respect the honor of a brave opponent; but go on, go on!"

"They would have been glad to get rid of me, by sending me to Tobolsk or to Irkutsk, but luckily or unluckily, so few prisoners had been made that they were not considered worth a separate transport; thus I was dragged along with the Cossacks into whose clutches I had fallen. About ten minutes ago, a pack of these fellows had blown up a battery left in the mire by our people, but they must have been disturbed in their work by you or somebody else; for these valiant heroes came to the pulk stationed up there by the woods, driving through the snow on their little animals, to report that the enemy was approaching. The Cossack, however, is intrepid only against a flying, exhausted and defenceless enemy. Show him a bold front, and he is off in double-quick time. This did these fellows, when I took advantage of a momentary confusion among them, to ransom myself by flight. I fell in with you. Well, Rasinski, now I am your prisoner, you need not fear that I will run away again."

which the Viceroy was engaged? How did that turn out?" asked Rasinski.

"I was riding by the side of the Prince; we were both absorbed in gloomy reflections, constantly called up by the dismal look of things around us. We were about two hours' march from Krasnoi, when the men took alarm at something marching around us in great numbers. We crowded together and formed one compact mass. Suddenly the heights before us became crested by dark masses, and with terror we beheld the enemy in numbers far superior to our own, interposing themselves between us and our home. But what yet more stirred the heart of every soldier, this impassable rampart rose between us and our Emperor. We now first became aware that through the more rapid pace of our horses, we were an hour's march ahead of our corps, and that the roads were swarming with only the emaciated, powerless and unarmed fugitives. At the same moment a Russian officer came riding up, and summoned us to surrender. 'Twenty thousand Russians block up the way before you,' he cried, 'and fifty guns are ready to tear you in pieces; your Emperor with his guard is entirely routed; perhaps at this moment he is a prisoner.' I saw the rage of the Viceroy, which even deprived him of the power of speech. I cried out therefore with all my might, 'Away with you!—if you have twenty thousand men, we have eighty thousand. A Frenchman never surrenders before fighting.' The Russian rode back, and not two minutes had elapsed, before the hills on our front and flanks were crowned with batteries. A blaze shot forth, and thick clouds of smoke rose over the white snow-masses, as if the jaws of ice-bound Hecla were opening around us. A shower of grape and canister burst upon us. The unarmed and defenceless fugitives press together like a frightened flock of sheep, when the wolf breaks in among them. The Viceroy is beside himself at being separated from his corps; he feels that he must place himself at their head, and yet cannot make up his mind to abandon the helpless multitude around him.

"But the chief of his staff, General Guilleminot, urges him to hasten back, while we collect the despairing people around us, try to reduce them to order, and inspire them with courage to offer what resistance they can. Among those scattered about in the hollow were a number of officers, colonels, even generals, all on foot. They quickly assume the command of the momentarily formed companies; the general becomes a captain; the colonel his lieutenant; the subaltern enters the ranks as a private. Every one does the best he can with the

"But you speak of an engagement, in

arms yet left to him. Only a few have muskets; most have only their side-arms, which they use to cut wood with in the bivouac; a great many have nothing but a cudgel as a support to their enfeebled bodies. But courage, the kindling fire of revenge, compensates for every deficiency. Thus we resolutely advanced against the enemy, while the Viceroy made the best of his way back.

"For one hour did we stand under that destructive fire of grape and canister; in vain we waited for Eugene to come up with his troops, and break open the way of escape towards Krasnoi. He must, no doubt, also have been attacked by overwhelming forces, for we heard a heavy cannonading in our rear and in front also. The road from Smolensko to Krasnoi seemed as one uninterrupted battle-field. At last, seeing no hope of rescue in our front, we determined to retreat, and open ourselves a path to the Vice-roy, from whom some heavy columns of the Russians already began to cut us off. We clung together in masses, like a phalanx, and again turned our steps into the wilderness. The enemy, who had advanced close up to the main road, did not at first comprehend our purpose; he seemed astonished, and suffered us to pass half-way by him, calling out to us, as we hurried past his lines, to surrender. We did not listen to him. Those who came too near were answered with ball and thrusts of the bayonet. Upon this, terribly did the fury of the enemy explode. At one and the same instant ten thousand men and thirty cannons dash their whole fire upon us, and half our brave fellows lie dismembered or dead strewed upon the snow, which they crimson with their blood. The rest, however, pressed forward resolutely; they cast no look back to bid their fallen comrades farewell. The thunder of the enemy's artillery crashed behind us, his balls mowed down whole ranks at a sweep—still a small band succeeded in reaching their friends, who received them with open arms. I believed also that I had happily attained that goal; but the evil one sent a pack of Cossacks after us,—those vermin now first plucked up courage to advance to make prisoners of any poor devil lagging behind. Thus I fell in their power—and the rest you know—"

"We are very happy to have heard it from yourself at least," said Rasinski, giving the dragoon his hand. "But what about the Viceroy?—do you know his fate?"

"Yes, yes! Rasinski; for had he been slain, I would not have spoken first of myself. He fought like a lion all day. You will perhaps see the marks he has left behind him. Finally night threw her protecting shield around him. Be it, either that the

Russians wished to spare him this day, for, by heaven! we did not sell our lives cheaply—or be it, that they made themselves too sure of their triumph, they made no determined effort to bring matters to an issue, contenting themselves with guarding every pass and passage of escape. But in the morning, the nest was empty after all, and the sun rose just in time to show to the Russians the gallant band marching on towards Krasnoi, and beyond all possible reach of successful pursuit. I myself saw their bayonets glittering in the morning sun, and—but do not laugh at me, I beg—but seriously, I uttered an orison of thanksgiving—the first since I was a boy."

"But how was this march effected?" asked Rasinski and Jaromir together.

"This time, we have to thank you, the Poles," answered Regnard, with emotion, "and if France has a memory, she will remember as long as Frenchmen and Poles exist, that she is indebted to you for the lives of a whole division of the army, and the preservation of the bravest and most humane general that ever led Frenchmen into the fire!"

Rasinski's attention was aroused to the utmost.

"Listen! It is the truth—for a dying countryman told it to me, who, poor fellow, was unable to hold out. Night had set in. The Viceroy gave himself up for lost; but still he was determined to make the desperate attempt of outflanking the enemy. By the demonstrations of the Prince, they had been induced to concentrate their main force on the left side of the road, which determined the Viceroy to pass him by the right. In the middle of the night, he silently breaks up, without putting out his watch-fires. Holding their breath, and with cautious steps, they pass through the snowy desert along the Russian lines. At this moment, as if all the powers of nature, as well as the infernal regions, were leagued against us, the full moon arises behind a bank of heavy clouds, illuminating the snowy surface with her light. Our people see the Russians so plainly before them, that they must be seen by them in return. The courage of the bravest even begins to sink. A Russian sentinel surmises what is going forward; he challenges; and at this crisis the noblest soldiers of France, the pride of her armies, her bravest warriors were irretrievably lost—had not a Pole saved all. Colonel Kliski—"

"Ah! my brave countryman!" interrupted Rasinski, with kindling eyes, already guessing the sequel.

"Colonel Kliski, without a moment's delay, gallops forward, and cries out in a disguised voice to the Russ:

"Art thou mad? Hold thy tongue, instantly! Dost thou not see that we belong to Ouvaroff's corps, and are stealing into the enemy's rear?"

"The man, hearing his own mother tongue, stands still in amazement. Several of his comrades, and some officers too, who hear these words, step nearer, and offer 'a good evening.' Kliski remains still, speaks to them in a low but friendly manner, begs them to keep back the Cossacks, so that they may not do mischief by their rashness; and thus taries in the midst of the enemy, until he clearly sees that our troops have gained a clear passage. Now he spurs away after them; and within the hour, the escape is successfully completed."

Manly tears rose into Rasinski's eyes as he listened to this exploit of his countryman.

"Brave Kliski!" he said again, "thou wert always the pride of Poland!—thou wilt continue to be such for ages to come!"

"Yes, France owes a heavy debt of gratitude to you, Poles!" resumed Regnard. "She would deserve the contempt of all honest men, if she did not forever remember it, and reward you for it, when time shall prepare the opportunity to do so."

"But, from whom did you receive your information?" asked Rasinski.

"From Captain Lebrun," he answered, "of the Fortieth; a brave youth, who deserved a better fate."

"I knew him," said Jaromir, with some emotion. "At Moscow, he was in bivouac close by our quarters. We even took a walk together through the city on the first evening. And he has fallen?"

"He had been wounded during the day's fighting," continued Regnard, "but still he exerted himself to the utmost to perform the necessary march. The army was already secure when his strength failed him; he fell behind, and was picked up by the roving Cossacks. By accident we met, when he told me what had happened. The barbarous treatment which he received—for we were not even supplied with food—the loss of blood—in short, it was too much for him. Now he lies quiet under the snow, as do many thousands more of ours!—who cares about it?"

However much Regnard endeavored to maintain the dry, careless tone of a narrator, those who knew him more intimately could not but observe the admixture of grief and emotion, which he could not suppress. But, indeed, times and seasons were such, that the most hardened were rendered feeling and tender, and the most callous had to shed scalding tears.

By this time they had arrived at the bivouac. Jaromir was plunged in deep and

mournful reverie; for the remembrance of Lebrun called up before his soul all the incidents of those days which became so eventful to him, with renewed force and liveliness. Even the disgusting and harrowing scenes of terror, with which he was now every day surrounded, faded in contrast with those glowing images stamped upon his memory. Thus, all pain, as well as all happiness, has its seat in the inner sanctuary of the soul; and no external circumstance can penetrate the breast as deeply, as self-created sorrows or joys seat themselves there. But he was yet in ignorance of Alisette's fate;—the forbearance of Boleslaus had kept it from him, well knowing how powerfully it would shake his whole being.

Rasinski and Regnard waited upon the Duke of Elchingen, to present their reports. The Marshal listened with the most marked attention to what Regnard disclosed about the events of the day previous. He inquired minutely concerning the numbers and the probable objects of the enemy. The answers, of course, could not be very satisfactory.

"I see that there is a hot day in reserve for us; but it will be a day of glory!" he said, with the resolute and calm mien and voice of a hero. "To-day let our warriors rest; they will learn betimes that they have to combat not only the terrors of nature, but an enemy far superior in numbers. I trust we shall conquer both. We will set out two hours after midnight."

Ney then dismissed Rasinski and Regnard. They found Jaromir and Boleslaus, the only remaining officers of the regiment, at the watch-fire. Regnard inquired for Bernard and Louis. A look from Rasinski left him no doubt as to their fate.

"Dead—these also!" he said, shaking his head. "This soil, encrusted in ice as with a coat of mail, is as bloodthirsty as a vampire!"

Jaromir, while relating all that was known about the two missing ones, endeavored once more to create a hope in their behalf; but Rasinski, generally so full of courage and confidence, where others had long abandoned all hope, rejected every consolation of that nature.

"In this case I see nothing for me to build a hope upon," he said, "and for that reason I am the less concerned about what may await me *there*," pointing with his hand to the region through which their route was to lead them. "Thus things are brought to a level at last."

"I have another trouble at heart," said Regnard, after a short silence. "My young friend there will pardon me, if I should happen to touch upon a disagreeable matter. Does any one know what has become of Alisette?"

Jaromir's look fell gloomily to the ground; with a shudder he wrapped himself closer in his cloak.

"After a certain occurrence in Moscow, I separated myself from her," said Regnard, who, of the same creed with most military men, regarded his immoral connexion with the girl as a matter of perfect indifference. "I knew very well that she was thoughtless and volatile, but I did not want to know it in that shape. I still take an interest in her fate, and a deep one in that of the child; for I am its father. I procured horses and a wagon for her in Moscow, and left her a liberal sum for travelling expenses. But now all this will be insufficient. I have not had a sight of her since the first day of our departure. It may go hard with her in the end. While in my captivity over there, I had enough of my own thoughts about it—thoughts too easily forgotten when the hour of trial comes upon us. It is my earnest purpose to take care of her and the child; for it was I who induced her to follow into Russia. You, my friend, I doubt not, will afford me your assistance in carrying this into effect?"

Boleslaus, painfully embarrassed, kept silence; for he felt keenly how shocked Jaromir would be on learning the truth of the case: but the child was alive—even close by; and of this the father must be told, as he wished to take care of it. It was, therefore, a very welcome circumstance to him, when Jaromir arose, too powerfully excited by the recollections awakened by the conversation he had just overheard, and with hasty strides left the spot.

"Hem! I am sorry for that," said Regnard, conjecturing the cause; "but I cannot understand why the man should be so sensitive."

"Let us be thankful, Colonel, that we are alone," replied Boleslaus. "I can give you information about that unhappy woman."

He then recounted the occurrences of which he that morning had been a witness, and which now first filled his soul with horror, at this dereliction from nature, bordering on insanity, since he knew that Alisette was really the mother of the innocent. Nothing but the distracted torpor into which the surrounding dreadful wretchedness might throw a mind unaccustomed to look to anything higher than an animal existence, could furnish him with the least explanation of so abandoned a state of the heart.

"What wickedness!" cried Regnard, as he learned the facts. "But where is the child?—Is it saved?—Tell me everything."

"It is probably only a few steps from here, lying in sweet slumber," said Boleslaus; "I will lead you to it."

They went together to the bivouac of the wounded chasseur, who shared his attentions to the child with a sick woman, the widow of a drummer. The old soldier rose respectfully on Regnard's approach.

"Comrade!" said the latter, much excited, "I owe thee more than my life, for thou hast saved my child!"

"The mother would not have done so much for it," answered the chasseur; "but it is now comfortable enough, sir. Just please to look—there it lies and sleeps like a princess!"

The child was packed around with hay, in a kind of basket, and covered with a light cloth. The widow of the drummer, who had been killed at Viazma, sat by its side, tending it.

Regnard looked upon his child sadly. He lightly kissed its brow, taking care not to wake it. He then turned round to the old yager and the widow:

"My friends," he said, "if God should see fit that we regain France, I will reward you according to my ability. At present I am as poor and destitute as yourselves, for I am just fresh from a Russian stripping. Be faithful to me. We will divide our cares and joys for the little angel between us. For the moment, I have nothing else to offer you but this shake of the hand!"

"And truly, that is the best, after all, captain," cried the chasseur, giving him a close grip in return. "A hand on which we may rely is better than heaps of gold. If I should stick fast in the snow, you'll draw me out, I'll be bound. During these last few days, I know of many a one who would still be marching with us, if his comrade had not been too tired and discouraged just to stay with him three minutes, to help him out of a snow-pit, into which as boys they had jumped a hundred times a day and crawled out again, only for the sake of the sport. Yes, colonel, on such a hand we may rely. But gold—that is not very current here. When, four days ago, we marched into Smolensko, a soldier of the artillery was sitting by the gate, on the roadside, and had a lump of pure silver, as big as a child's head, lying in his lap. Perhaps it had been melted down from one of the saints in the Muscovite churches, and had made the journey in the guise of a cannon ball, in some limber-box. Well, he offered to sell that large lump of fine silver for a piece of bread and a bottle of rum. But do you suppose that he got rid of it on these terms, though thousands passed by him? Not he. He was fortunate, when an Italian colonel offered him in exchange a piece of bread as large as my hand, and a small dram from his hunting-flask, altogether not worth more than two sous. Yes, my colonel, that is the way things change; but the heart of a French

soldier does not change. That is my opinion, colonel. 'Done!—I strike the bargain! Hand for hand! My wounds, I think, will soon be better, and then perhaps we can help one another.'

The old man would gladly have chattered another quarter of an hour, had not Regnard interrupted him, by asking him for his name and the regiment he belonged to; for the facings and other marks on his uniform were already torn and defaced.

"And you travel in the same wagon with that good woman?" he added.

"Certainly, as long as our horses are able to drag us along; but if the forage is no better than it is about here, it will not be a great while before they give in."

"And what is your name?"

"Jacques Desiré Pallier, *mon capitaine!* and this woman is the widow René."

"Very well, Pallier and Madame René, we shall see each other again. Now, good night, and see that you keep my little daughter snug and warm."

They then returned to their bivouac, where fatigue soon plunged all into forgetfulness.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

A PALE moonlight penetrated the grey clouds—the wind moaned with hollow murmur over the snow-fields, when the soldiers again broke up their night lodgings. No sound of drum announced their departure. They prepared themselves in the deepest silence for their dreary march. Marshal Ney had caused Regnard to be supplied with a horse, and retained him at his side in the capacity of aid. Rasinski marched, riding at the head of his men, in close order, as if expecting the enemy in front.

For several successive hours they struggled on, amid the usual difficulties and dangers, without meeting with the least molestation. For the last few days the cold had somewhat abated, so that their sufferings were not so severe from that cause as they had been: the weather even had the appearance of changing into a thaw. The sky was lightly overcast, but another fall of snow was not to be apprehended. The sun now began to purple the clouds in the rear of the army, and an incipient dawn spread itself over the dead and sterile landscape. They had for some time been accustomed to find on their march, in every hollow and gully, arms, knapsacks, saddles, helmets, muskets—even cannon and tumbrils, with soldiers, who had perished from

hunger or exhaustion. But here these marks of dissolution increased to such a degree as to arouse the apprehensions of even the bravest. However dreary the night had been, with its mystical veil hiding many horrors from sight, the day, in lifting this veil, became far more appalling.

Suddenly, the heavens were darkened by clouds in the east, and the sun, emerging from beneath the line of the horizon, shot forth menacing, and throwing his beams like a river of blood, in its length across the snow-white wintry desert. The shadows of men and animals stretched far away, like lank spectres, over the glistening plain in grotesque confusion of a thousand forms. Agreeably surprised, every eye turned to the orb. For more than a week they had seen no trace of the sun. This day, he once more appeared; but the splendid meteor which otherwise gladdens and invigorates the breast of the most desponding, now excited only an anxious shudder; for he stood on the firmament resembling a fiery god, shooting forth his scowling threatenings from beneath his brows of dark overhanging clouds. It seemed to have thrown back its sombre covering only for the purpose of casting a more venomous look upon the horrors and devastations which the earth held up to view.

"Thus the sun rose at Borodino," said Jaromir, in a low voice, to Rasinski. "The Emperor called it the sun of Austerlitz."

Rasinski for certain reasons did not wish to enter upon such a subject, at this time.

"I think we shall have a clear day, if the wind does not shift," was all he replied.

The friends were interrupted by an outcry, which broke out in their front. In surprise, Rasinski turned his head in the direction from which it proceeded, and saw at a glance the cause of the terror that had befallen the men. They had just reached the summit of a small acclivity, and the whole projecting plain lay before them. There, on the white expanse of snow, as far as the eye could reach, lay in black confused masses, carcasses of men and horses, wrecks of broken guns and gun-carriages, wagons, arms, camp-furniture, and baggage.

This was the battle-ground on which Prince Eugene—attacked on every side—had so bravely defended himself two days previously.

Profound silence succeeded in the ranks of the soldiers. The unexpected sight had burst upon them like some monstrous spectre, and seemed to drive back the vital powers to the heart with a paralyzing force. Hardly a breath was to be heard, as if no one felt emboldened to disturb by human sounds the solemn spectacle of this vast cemetery, where death himself had become stark and stiff in

the icy embrace of winter. Even Ney was visibly affected, but only for a moment. The next, he cast his eagle glance over the prospect, seeking for the enemy, and the most advantageous position in which to meet him.

" Soldiers!" he cried, turning to the men coming up and crowding in dense masses around him: " soldiers!—here our comrades have celebrated a festival of glory, and hewed themselves a path through the midst of their enemies. Let their example be followed! Perhaps fortune may grant us the achievement of a similar feat even to-day!"

Rasinski also maintained in his countenance that firm composure which outwardly never forsook him.

" My friends!" he exhorted his men, " those who lie here died an honorable death. This snow is crimsoned with noble blood. It must fire you with indignation—it calls for revenge! Think of that when I shall be able to point out to you the enemy!"

Anger flashed in his eyes while he spoke. He proudly raised his head erect, and unconsciously put his hand to his sword. His look pierced like a kindling tongue of lightning the hearts of the warriors. Under such a leader their courage could never falter. By his eye he, in one moment, broke the chilling fetters of dread which had struck through their breasts at the sight of this silent Golgotha; and again courage stretched her free pinions in conquering strength.

They proceeded onward. As they gradually descended the gentle declivity, they approached nearer and nearer to the scene of the recent action, and finally wound their way through the very midst of the desolation. The marshal was the foremost: with grave calmness he examined the aspect of things. The position which the troops had occupied in the battle could be clearly distinguished.

" Here stood the Fourteenth," said the hero of this campaign, pointing to a spot on one side, where the glittering front-plates of crushed shakos still showed the number of that regiment.

" The Italian Guard must have fought in that place," rejoined Rasinski; " for there lie their dead. But where may their living be now?"

He uttered these last words in a subdued tone, as he did not wish too far to betray his forebodings. By a glance directed to Regnard, he plainly intimated what he thought.

" Hem!" said the latter, " they have at least reached Krasnoi; but what may have taken place between sunrise of yesterday and the present time, I can conjecture as little as I can where we ourselves shall be this time to-morrow. But, look here, I beg of you!—here to the left!"

It appeared that they had now come to that

part of the battle-field where the enemy's artillery had made the greatest havoc. Long lines of dead bodies lay stretched on the snow, which for a great distance, was red from blood, now turned into solid ice. Never did a battle-ground present a more dismal scene; for the dead remained in the same position they assumed when the breath left their bodies, frozen rigid as marble. Their features were, for the most part, so unchanged, that those acquainted with them would easily have recognised their friends and relatives. Still, the distorting impress of the death-agony rested on almost every face;—the icy breath of winter had forbidden the features to mould themselves into that quiet, friendly smile which lingers on the countenance as the last trace of the released spirit, when its final struggle is over. This was not the case here. It looked as if the grim touch of winter had stiffened the animated form, and stamped its hard, ruthless seal upon it earlier than death had impressed his. There was therefore to be seen no calm brow, no gently-smiling lips, which might testify of a happy deliverance from the miseries of earth; the faces of all were fixed and rigid in deeply-chiselled folds and creases, produced by anguish, despair, wrath, and pain—as if the billows of the ocean had, on a sudden, become congealed and transformed into stone. Ney, with all his great self-command, could not but feel in his own breast, that this mute wandering through the dreary domains of death was anything but calculated to enkindle fresh courage; for, in the unceremonious dormitory of the departed every one beheld, as it were, in a prophetic mirror, his own coming fate. These warriors, covered with the cicatrices of a hundred wounds, had seen death in many appalling forms, and did not greet him like novices. But the fallen ones had hitherto reposed on the field of victory—the laurel had entwined their brow—to fall was to triumph! But here—what destiny were the survivors to achieve but renewed sufferings and conflicts? And what was the lot of the dead left behind on the hostile soil—whom no friendly hand would provide with burial—whose graves no monument would adorn—whose bodies were the destined prey of the unclean birds of this dreary clime, and the hungry wolves of these awful deserts?

The army, marching rapidly onward, now reached a deep gully, into which the road descends, afterwards to rise equally abrupt into the broad table-lands of Katowa.

" Dost thou recognise the country about here?" inquired Rasinski, turning to Jaromir.

The latter looked attentively about him, and then answered:

" Unless I am deceived by the snow, I

think this is the place where, three months ago, we beat Newerowskoy, and then, with the captured guns, fired a salute in honor of the Emperor's birth-day."

" You are right," said Regnard. " You have a good military eye, my young friend. What do you think; shall we fire a salute for a victory to-day also ? "

Jaromir was on the point of answering, when the report of a dull, but not distant field-piece broke the profound stillness around. This signal of the enemy's proximity sped through every heart like an electric shock. The practised ears of the soldiers enabled them at once to estimate the distance from which the gun was fired, and their eyes were turned in the direction from whence it was heard. The keenest anxiety was legible in every countenance, to learn whether the shot would be repeated—whether it was the commencement of an engagement, or merely meant for a signal, or peradventure, accidental. The Marshal ordered a halt. He hesitated to lead his people, just at this moment, down into the hollow, as it required the greatest effort of the exhausted powers of both men and horses to climb the ice-covered height on the other side. Rasinski was ordered to advance with his feeble troop, and to reconnoitre on the heights of Katowa whether the enemy were in the vicinity : the rest of the army in the meantime went into camp, in order to gather strength to meet any emergency.

Rasinski soon reached the level heights of Katowa, but in vain his eye sought for the enemy. He could discover nothing but the monotonous and extended lines of the dark forests of firs, which stretched along the horizon in interminable distance. A dreary silence reigned every where. For half an hour he cautiously rode along the great road, divided his men, and ordered Jaromir, with the one-half, to reconnoitre to the right to the distance of a cannon-shot, whilst he would examine the left himself. In his ride he came nearer to the verge of the forest. There he saw tracks of hoofs in the snow, which became more numerous as he advanced. This convinced him that the enemy must be in the vicinity, for some of the tracks were quite fresh. He fixed his searching glance on the skirts of the forest which seemed to hide the real danger. Frequently he commanded a halt, so as to be able to listen ; but everything was silent and still. Suddenly a flock of crows appeared over the woods and flew, hoarsely cawing, across the road.

" These birds have been scared away," said Rasinski to his men ; " there are people in those woods."

" A fact, Colonel !" hastily cried the smart Bliski, stooping down, and trying to pene-

trate with his eyes between the trunks of the trees ; " indeed, there are men marching."

They were just then at a point which admitted a view into the interior of the forest ; and, as Rasinski stooped to the saddle-bow, he saw a black column defiling across the opening in the woods, as if marching on a wide road through the heart of the forest. He quickly dismounted, and suffering his companions to ride on, that they might not be seen through the aperture in the forest, he threw himself on the snow, to observe the movements of the enemy. It took the column, which was infantry, some time to march by ; but, as he could not overlook the hollow, it was impossible to estimate their numbers. Now, however, followed artillery, and Rasinski could distinctly count the guns. Having counted up to thirty, he was satisfied that these troops in strength by far overmatched those under the French Marshal's command. He sprang again to his saddle, and made all speed to report what he had seen.

Jaromir had already rejoined the corps, without having discovered trace of the enemy. The men had, in the meantime, as some low firs were close by, cut them down and kindled a fire, and the marshal ordered them to warm and refresh themselves as much as possible for the moment, that they might be in condition successfully to repel an attack.

Rasinski's report at once showed the desperate situation in which the troops were now placed.

" The Russians undoubtedly occupy the woods on the heights of Katowa," said the marshal, " and only wait for our appearance, to attack us from every quarter, and then cut off our retreat, by fortifying the ravine before us. We must open a path for ourselves right through the midst of them ; but we must delay the encounter a few hours longer, so as to have the night in our favor. What o'clock is it ? "

" Half-past one," answered Rasinski.

" Very well ; at four o'clock it will be perfectly dark. We will break up at that hour. Until then, we can rest and collect our strength."

Rasinski rode back to his men. Jaromir caused the horses to be fed, as, fortunately, they had still a small quantity of oats and hay ; and the men were soon busied in preparing their spare meal. Thus an hour passed away in tumultuous anxiety.

CHAPTER LXXX.

"RASINSKI!" suddenly exclaimed Jaromir, "do you see yonder on the rising ground?"

"Cossacks!—and I wager my head they are not alone!" replied Rasinski.

Upon the heights appeared three horsemen, seemingly thrown forward to reconnoitre. They were soon remarked by all; and then occurred in the French ranks that restless stir and low murmur, betokening the expectation of an important event.

"Jump on your horse, Jaromir," said Rasinski, "and ride to the corner of the forest; thence you will see far over the country."

Jaromir, now the best mounted in the regiment, sped swiftly across the snow, in obedience to the order. But he returned even more rapidly, to announce that the entire heights were covered with Cossacks, and that infantry columns were debouching from the depths of the forest.

Just then, Colonel Regnard, who, by the marshal's order had also been sent to reconnoitre, rode by.

"This looks like work, Rasinski!" he cried, in passing; "the ball opens just like the day before yesterday. The wood is as full of Russians as an ant-hill of ants."

The drums beat. The troops stood to their arms. The disordered groups of weaponless stragglers and invalids formed themselves into a dense mass.

"For us the fight is a pleasure," exclaimed Rasinski; "but it is hard upon Boleslaus and the other wounded. We must do our best to shield them from harm. But who comes here?"

A Russian officer was seen descending the hill, waving a white handkerchief.

"Useless trouble, sir," said Rasinski, proudly to himself, as he distinguished the Russian's object. "We shall not treat for peace so long as we can handle our arms."

The marshal was busy placing and ordering his troops. He galloped through the ranks, showing himself everywhere, directing and encouraging all. Rasinski sent an order to report to him the approach of a flag of truce; but before the message reached him, the Russian officer reached the outposts, and, on distinguishing the Polish uniform, summoned them in their own language to surrender to overpowering forces. Rasinski sprang forward like an incensed lion.

"What!" he shouted, "you would seduce our men—incite them to desert! That is not the duty of a flag of truce. You are my prisoner!"

The alarmed officer would have turned his horse, but Rasinski already held the bridle, and his soldiers surrounded the Russian so quickly that resistance and flight were alike impossible.

"You will surely respect the sacred rights of a flag of truce!" cried the Russian.

"You should have waited at proper distance, till you knew if it pleased us to receive you," replied Rasinski. "It is against all usages of war to approach an enemy's army as you have done."

"Take me to your commander," said the officer; "he will listen to my well-intended offers. The bravest must yield to necessity. You have no alternative but capitulation."

"We shall see that," answered Rasinski, well assured beforehand of the marshal's decision. "Here comes our commander, Marshal Ney. That name may suffice to convince you that you will waste your words."

The marshal came. Rasinski rode to meet him, and reported what had passed.

"You have done your duty as an officer and man of honor," replied Ney; "I should take shame to myself did I hesitate to confirm your words." And he rode forward and inquired the Russian's pleasure.

"Marshal Kutusow sends me," began the officer. "He would not offend so renowned a warrior and general by asking him to lay down his arms if any alternative remained open. Upon the surrounding heights stand eighty thousand men, and one hundred pieces of cannon. If you doubt my words, you are at liberty to send an officer, whom I will conduct through our ranks, that he may count our strength."

"I hope to get near enough to your army to count them myself," replied the marshal, with flashing eye. "Tell Prince Kutusow that Marshal Ney has never yet surrendered, and that the world's history shall never record his having done so. Yonder is the goal which duty and honor assign me; I will break a road through your ranks, though your forests became armies."

"They will do so," replied the Russian. The words had scarce left his lips, when the thunder of artillery echoed from the heights in front and on the left flank, and an iron hail crashed and rattled upon the icy surface of the plain.

"This is treachery!" cried the marshal, sternly, as he looked up and beheld the hills crowned on all sides with levelled guns and dark masses of troops. "There is no parleying under fire! You are my prisoner!"

The officer, confounded at being thus sacrificed by the imprudence or recklessness of his friends, gave up his sword.

"Take him to the rear!" commanded the marshal. "General Ricard, forward! Attack the enemy with the bayonet. You shall have the honor of opening the road!"

The general, at the head of fifteen hundred men, pressed resolutely forward.

This little band was almost lost to sight on the immense space that lay before them ; it seemed nothing short of madness to undertake to advance against the compact masses of the enemy, which, like threatening thunder-clouds, came rolling up blacker and denser over the hills. But the marshal had ordered it, and the soldiers placed in him unlimited confidence. They rushed, therefore, unhesitatingly down the steep declivity into the ravine—thence to storm the opposite heights.

The marshal, in the mean time, flies through the ranks, arranging them for the conflict. Regnard galloped up to Rasinski, and brought him the order to cover with his regiment, now reduced to sixty combatants, the left wing from the attack of the Cossacks. The artillery showed front against the enemy, and with its six small pieces undertook to defend itself against the overwhelming batteries of the Russians.

The enemy's first volley was followed by a silence like that preceding an outburst of thunder. Soon on the snow-covered plain crowds of men and horses sprang up far and wide, as though, like the soldiers of Cadmus, they started out of the ground.

Rasinski took up his position a few hundred steps to the left of the road, by a snow-covered hill, which half-sheltered him from the fire of the enemy's artillery, but from whence he still had a view over the whole battle-ground. His deportment was grave, as it always was in battle, but, collected and full of confidence, as when, three months earlier, at the head of his regiment, he broke in upon the hostile ranks. Putting himself at the head of his men, General Ricard forced his way through the ravine, and proceeded at quick time, and with charged bayonets, to storm the Russian batteries on the heights of Katowa. A stream of fire encircled the horizon ; far as the eye could reach, columns of smoke curled up from the hills, as if the earth had burst into a hundred volcanos. A deafening crash rent the atmosphere—solid ground shook visibly, and a shower of cannon-balls and round shot came whizzing through the air like a storm of gigantic hail. They rattled and tore among the ice-cakes and snow which covered the field, making them whirl and scatter in a thousand glittering fragments. One glance at Ricard's brave fellows was enough to break the heart, for in that single moment one half of them were dashed to the ground. The still closed ranks were thinned out in such a manner that the survivors stood like the trees of a well-felled forest. Their leader, however, had not fallen ; his voice called together those that were spared, and again they rushed up the heights vomiting forth fire and death. A second discharge from the batteries, like a

raging surge of the sea, again swept through their ranks. Only a few are left standing, and that few, finding it impossible to conquer, rush back for safety to the ranks of their comrades.

But Marshal Ney, at the head of the main body, is already in full march on the enemy. In a compact phalanx, like a waving wall, this cloud of heroes—the “bravest of the brave” at their head, filled with sorrow for the destruction of their brothers, and resolved to sacrifice the last drop of their hearts-blood for revenge—advance upon the murderous batteries. The enemy also catches the spirit of this formidable attack. Their front line, at least three times superior in numbers—in excellent condition, and composed of strong, able-bodied men, not at all exhausted by hardship—march against the venturesome assailants, in proud anticipation of outflanking and destroying them all.

The moment has arrived for Rasinski to act. With his small troop he rushes through the hollow, up the hill to the left, and throws himself on the enemy's right flank. A simultaneous movement is made against the left, by a few hundred Illyrian light-horse—consternation seizes the enemy at seeing this. Perceiving that his antagonist considers victory as sure, he begins himself to consider it possible. The daring confidence of the assailants weakens his reliance on himself ; he halts—he wavers. Then Ney dashes upon the oscillating lines with his exasperated soldiers, throws them into disorder, breaks them, and chases them before him as a mountain torrent overflowing its banks. Triumphant he rushes forward on the accustomed path of victory. But, alas ! here the treacherous goddess abandons him ! For already a second host, like the many-headed hydra, springs up as if out of the ground, and out of a thousand murderous tubes darts its flaming tongues of fire against him. The ground seems to open—the firmament to be torn into shreds with the concussion. All stagger but Ney, who stands firm in the midst of the hurricane. His generals lie wounded and prostrate around him the snow crimsoned with their blood ; his troops are terribly thinned—the ground is black with the fallen. Once more he cries : “Forward!” endeavoring to collect the fragments of his force ; a further discharge scatters yet more destruction among the broken ranks. Now the invisible spirit of a panic terror seizes upon the remainder—they disperse and fly on every side. Rasinski's brave men are the last that take to flight ; he conducts the retreat himself, for with him rest the sole means of preservation.

Kutusow, however, did not by pursuit venture to further molest these warriors. He pre-

ferred sending destruction among them from a distance, while his men gather together and are again formed in some order. The marshal examines the battle-ground; his countenance is stern, the brow strongly knit, but still bold and determined. The eyes of his men are riveted on his features, for from them alone they will adopt the conviction, that all hope of deliverance is at an end. As long as his lips do not announce the fact, they look forward to a happy issue. They perceive from his deep thoughtfulness that he is meditating some feint. With a vigilant eye he observes the enemy and his movements; now and then only he casts a mournful look to the spot where, for a few minutes, he had purchased a transient success at the sacrifice of the lives of so many soldiers. The murderous firing still continues, and the space occupied by the little army is so confined that the enemy's balls cross it everywhere. The very same shots which penetrate the ranks burst into the wagons drawn up in a body behind, containing the wounded, the sick, the women and children, which, in helpless weakness, are thus given up a prey to destruction. What arm now to save? Night throws her veil at length over them, and shrouds the distressed within her shadowy canopy. The marshal really seems to have found a door of egress from this circle of death. He measures with his eye the distance and position of the enemy; he directs his looks to either side—behind, and at all points; it is evident that he regards the localities among which he is placed for some new purpose, and forms plans by which to draw from them new advantages. His conceptions are matured; he has called no council of war; he has conferred with no one, but follows the dictates of his own intrepidity and knowledge. He beckons to Regnard, Rasinski, and the other officers, and to each he imparts his orders. They hasten to their respective troops. "Fall in! fall in!" is heard everywhere, and the artillery begins to move at every point. But whereunto?—towards the enemy? *No! they turn their faces again to the snow-wastes of Russia!* The enemy, from his elevation, looks with amazement upon this demonstration; he appears to surmise some such stratagem as that which two days before had been played by the Viceroy of Italy. Kutusow, consequently, extends his flanks, and thus prolongs the net in which he hopes to ensnare the lion. He has the power to annihilate him, for with one charge he might utterly overwhelm this small band. But it seems that the cool-headed old man put a far higher value upon the exploit of bringing them prisoners into Russia, than sweeping them out of existence. That there existed the least possible chance of their escaping this captivity, seemed to the old Rus-

sian to belong to the province of dreams and miracles. He now possessed the power to destroy the most redoubtable soldier of France; but that was not sufficient for his ambition. He wished to humble him by presenting, not his head, but his sword, to the Emperor Alexander.

The French soldiers received the command of their chief with shuddering surprise. "How!" they asked each other, "march back into the horrid land out of which we have but just escaped!—turn our back on our homes!" Every retrograde step was taken with a secret dread; but still they obeyed, for their commander had ordered it, and their only confidence was in him.

The night seemed to quicken the motion of her darkening wings, and sunk deeper and denser upon the cold expanse of snow. The heights which were alive with enemies, were already lost in the indistinctness of twilight, and only singly and far between came the ponderous balls in their retreating rear.

In profound silence, with weary feet, and with corroding sorrow at heart, the soldiers waded on through the deep, loose snow, since the marshal diverged to the right from the main road, towards the woods. But the measure of their calamities was not yet filled; for by degrees, beginning with a hollow murmur, the storm-spirit began to let himself be heard, rushing closer and closer upon them; but at this time it was not the freezing breath of Boreas, but a humid southwester, driving clouds of snow before it on the highway of heaven, and lifting entire drifts from the ground in bewildering commotion. This furious whirlwind enveloped the unfortunate wayfarers, depriving them of respiration. Horse and rider gasped for breath; their last remaining strength threatened to give way. The storm careered with shrill howlings over the plains; now it became entangled in the cavities and hollows; now it broke itself against the sturdy forests, rebounding in intersecting evolutions, so that turn which way they would it drove its bitter blast right into the faces of the exhausted men and animals. The line of march became uncertain and wavering; it swayed now to the right, now to the left. Now some deep hollow filled with drifted snow blocked up the way, and it became necessary to retrace their weary steps considerable distances, not knowing whether they were going from the enemy or right upon him. Then again, sudden and abrupt declivities, glazed with ice, compelled them to seek a different direction. The night became very dark; a black, heavy canopy of cloud, out of which the snow came pouring down, had entirely covered the sky. Nothing remained discernible to the eye, but the sheen of the

white, spectral pall in which this earth had decked itself. At last the physical powers, too severely taxed, became paralyzed; the stiff and benumbed foot refused to move; the weapon dropped from the hand. The marshal even seemed to have lost hope, and to be ready to bow his head before the all-subduing scourge. A halt was finally ordered in the midst of the ice and snow, to allow, if possible, the exhausted energies to recruit for renewed exertions. The marshal rode at the head of the column in the midst of Rasinski's men—Regnard by his side.

"Do you still know north from south, Rasinski?" he asked, quite low—"whether the enemy is in front or in rear? whether we are on the right or left side of the road? A compass would be worth a province now."

"Perhaps some stars may be seen, when this drifting ceases," answered Rasinski; "it has now lasted three hours, and must come to a pause some time."

"I have no longer any faith in the stars," replied Regnard, with a shake of the head, looking gloomily before him.

Rasinski tortured his brain to hit upon some means to direct their march with certainty. He had just caught a happy idea, when the marshal suddenly accosted him with the question: "Have your men and horses any strength left them?—if so, follow me. I believe that I have hit upon a method to find the way to the Dnieper, even through this chaos of snow."

"I have done the same!" exclaimed Rasinski eagerly, wishing at least to secure his share of the honor of falling upon a similar discovery. "If we could only ascertain the course of the brook, which must run through the hollow where we were obliged to turn back half-an-hour ago?"

"We understand each other," answered the marshal, with joy; "that is exactly my thought. We will try to find that spot once more; you shall accompany me with your men and some sappers."

They mounted instantly. The tracks left by the field-pieces, which had not yet had time to be snowed over or blown away, afforded indications of the way which the army had come. Rasinski's keen sense of observation, from which nothing escaped appertaining to localities or topography, and who possessed the most minute peculiarities within a powerful memory, helped them to decide at several doubtful places. In half-an-hour's time they reached the hollow. The wind had there piled up the snow to more than a man's height. The sappers, however, with gigantic efforts, succeeded in dislodging the snow, and they soon penetrated to a solid mirror of ice.

"I hope the frost has not congealed the

low water-courses clear to the bottom," said the marshal, with much concern, while the sappers were laboring to cut through the ice.

"I do not fear anything of that kind," replied Rasinski; "for all these little streamlets run through a warm, loamy soil; consequently they freeze up entirely only in the severest weather. There is no doubt but we will yet find water, and the more so, as it began to thaw yesterday."

He had judged correctly; for just then the axe penetrated the ice, and water bubbled up in the aperture. A few more strokes, and the opening was widened, so that the course of the brook could be ascertained.

In great joy the marshal exclaimed: "Then I hope we are safe. This brook must be our guide to the Dnieper, which cannot be very far off. Once over that stream, I think we shall have surmounted the worst, and soon be able to rejoin our comrades in front."

The marshal immediately sent orders to march—the troops having by this time had an opportunity in some measure to rest from their fatigue. In an hour, steadily following the course of the brook, they reached a dense forest. Here they were sheltered from the piercing wind, and the drifting sleet and snow had also ceased. The least indication of a favorable turn of fortune in such circumstances wonderfully contributes to revive the flagging spirits.

The march, therefore, proceeded with vigor. Confidence was also much strengthened from the circumstance that Rasinski, in a half-demolished hut of a miserable hamlet, found a peasant, old and lame, but acquainted with the neighboring localities. This old man declared that the river was quite near, but would hardly be passable, as the ice was not yet strong enough to resist wind and thaw. If a passage were at all possible, it would be at a single point, where the floating ice would crowd together from being stopped by a bold turn in the river, and at times formed a bridge tolerably firm and durable, even when utterly impassable higher up.

Rasinski promised the old man a rich reward if he would conduct him to this place; at the same time threatening him should he prove treacherous.

The old peasant replied: "Never fear me; I am not from Old Russia, but belong farther up there, where the people are not so much against you as hereabouts. If you can only cross the river, you will find shelter and kinder inhabitants on the other side; while on this side everything is pillaged and destroyed. Follow me, and be of good cheer; you will soon find that I am in the right."

He thus became the guide of the whole

corps, and before an hour had passed, brought them safely to the bank of a river which was destined to become either the salvation or destruction of this devoted band of brave men.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

THE moon arose behind dark, heavy clouds, shedding her pale lustre over the landscape, when Rasinski, at whose side the guide walked, emerged from the woods on the top of a hill, from which they had a free and uninterrupted view of surrounding objects. Nothing, however, was to be seen but the Dnieper, embedded between its low but steep shores, looking like some monstrous black-snake in tortuous windings crawling over the white snow-plains; for alas! there was yet no solid pavement of ice stretching across it—only detached clumps and cakes were drifting on its ruffled surface between the banks. Rasinski's keen eyes scanned the place all around, where nothing was heard but the crashing and thumping of the masses of ice.

"There," said the Mugic, pointing with his finger to a place where the river seemed to vanish out of sight—its course being hidden by the hills, "there the ice clogs in the shallow bend of the stream, and there alone can you cross."

Rasinski urged on his horse towards the place pointed out. While riding along the edge of the wood, he suddenly heard a rustling among the trees, and at the same time the crack of a whip, and the violent snorting and blowing of hard-pulling horses. He stopped to listen, for none of their wagons could possibly have reached this point.

"Is there a road through the woods here?" he asked the Russian.

"Yes, sir," the guide answered, "the road from Syrokorenje to Gosinoe. It is, perhaps, some peasants driving through the woods; but there can be no danger, for it seems to be only a sled."

Rasinski determined, however, to reconnoitre, and if necessary to stop the travellers. As soon, therefore, as they came in sight, he drew a pistol from his belt, galloped into the middle of the road, and called out loudly in Russian:

"Halt! or I fire!"

The driver of the sled, closely wrapped in thick furs, stopped his horses and answered also in Russian:

"What do you want?—We are good Russians.—Why do you stop us?"

Rasinski rode nearer, still with his cocked pistol in his hand.

"Where do you come from?—who are you?—and where are you going?" he demanded.

The driver, instead of answering, turned round to those sitting in the sled, and whispered in German:

"There are only two; shall I answer with the pistol, or drive on?"

Rasinski in the meantime had more closely examined the occupants of the sled; there were two men and two women, to judge from their apparel. Observing from the speech of the driver, which he had half-overheard, that they were not Russians, he supposed that they might be fugitive officers from the army. He therefore pushed his horse close up to the sled, held his pistol to the head of one of the men, and called out in German:

"We too are not what we appear; are we enemies or friends? Speak, or—"

A loud exclamation of joy interrupted the conclusion of Rasinski's address.

"Rasinski! Rasinski!" burst from the lips of those spoken to, and Louis threw himself on his neck. At the same moment, Bernard sprang hastily from the sled, and pressed up to him on the other side. Rasinski dismounted, and clasped his friends to his heart. Tears coursed down his manly cheeks. What questions and explanations now followed each other! "Is Jaromir living? where is Boleslaus?" enquired Bernard and Louis with one breath. This reminded Rasinski that an army was following his steps; he turned around, pointed back to the woods, and said: "They are there with the rest."

They now saw the advance-guard issuing from the woods. Rasinski again mounted his horse, and hastened to acquaint the marshal with the statement given by the guide. He then sought Jaromir, whom he found with Boleslaus, halting by the wagons, so that he was able to impart the joyful news to both at once. The young men, following the direction given them by Rasinski, hurried forward to welcome their friends.

The young men now first learned the fortunes which had befallen their companions, and were permitted to greet the betrothed and sister. Even Bianca was happy, in partaking the good spirits of those who were to her the dearest objects on earth, and she drew her breath with more freedom, now that she began to look upon their safety as almost attained; for after leaving the hunting-castle, the fugitives had undergone many hardships. Bernard's wound still kept him in such a state of debility that it was impracticable for him to pursue the journey immediately. In the hospitable house of old Gregorius, they had found a shelter, though an insecure one,

as on the second day, they learned that Dolgorow had obtained his liberty. They were therefore in constant fear of his vengeance, and kept themselves concealed during the day in one of the sepulchral vaults of the church, until Gregorius brought them under the protection of darkness to one of his clerical brethren, who, for five days, hid them in his house. From this house they set out on their flight, as Bernard was then sufficiently improved, and the Russian army approaching on every side; they effected their escape secretly and by night, so that their protector might not for their sakes become exposed to the consequences of his perilous agency. They had passed the preceding night in the woods; to-night they had hoped to complete their deliverance by reaching the French army. Willhofen, who was best acquainted with the country, drove the sled; Jeannette, still remained the faithful companion of Bianca. The fate of all seemed now about to be decided—their haven lay on the opposite shore.

But what inexpressible horror was compressed within that barrier which lay between them and safety!

The black train of the army had already spread itself over the snow-field shelving down towards the stream; but the travellers observed with astonishment that the throng on the bank this side continually increased, while no one was to be seen on the other. Willhofen drove towards the point where the passage was to be effected; but the crowd was already so dense that he could not get to the water. Rasinski sought out his friends among the confused mass, and with a sorrowing mien informed them, that no wagon, not even a horse, could cross the river, the ice being too thin to bear any such burthen. The congealed thoroughfare consisted only of floating pieces of ice massed together, and cemented by their own ponderosity. Only single persons had as yet ventured to cross; but even of these many had perished, by slipping down between the fissures.

At midnight the marshal gave orders to commence the passage. With heroic equanimity he had improved the three hours of delay by strengthening the bridge with all the means in his power. Silent, grave and steadfastly, keeping their ranks, a regiment of light infantry made the first essay. But hardly had the foremost platoon taken a few steps, when a dull crash sounded under their feet and the ice began to yield. Thinking to save themselves by rapidly passing over, they redouble their speed; but as other troops press on behind, the pressure on the icy surface is proportionally increased; they sink, with the clumps which support them, to their knees in the water; their feet become unsteady, slip, the black abyss opens—and the

wretches who have trusted themselves on the treacherous flakes disappear! Cries of terror rend the air; full of alarm, those next behind turn back and cast themselves with impetuous violence on the ranks of their comrades, already on their way to the bank.

Ney, as usual, was present at all points. He saw his braves sink beneath the merciless waters. Here and there a head was seen above the surface, or an arm thrust upwards, while a pitiful cry for help cut the listener to the heart. In a few seconds all had vanished—a hideous stillness reigned over the flood.

"In this way it is impossible," said the marshal; "we must try it singly."

The soldiers are now sent by groups of twenty only, instructed to make the attempt by jumping from one cake of ice to the other. This succeeds. New hope springs up in every breast. Just then the distant booming of cannon is heard. This unwelcome sound calls to mind the overwhelming superiority of the enemy, who may at any moment find the tracks and push after them. This swells the instinct of self-preservation powerfully in every breast. If the enemy did appear, those who gained the opposite side would be safe; but all who tarried on this side were irretrievably lost. The masses therefore press on, and a fearful struggle arises who shall be the first to tread the perilous path. Remonstrances and commands are in vain. The marshal himself tries to enforce his authority, but this also is set at nought. Dreading to be near him, the wretched creatures hasten eagerly to other points on the bank, where the darkness hides them from his glance. What should have been for their welfare thus becomes their destruction; their impetuous haste, their blind fury and imprudence, cause them to perish. They spread themselves over the ice, which does not bear up under the masses, but yields, and then parts asunder. The pressing crowd deprives each individual of the use of his strength and power of locomotion. The comrade pushes the comrade, the friend his friend, the soldier his officer, down into the turbulent current. The entire dismal expanse of ice resounds with a bellowing and crashing dreadful to listen to. Prayers, curses, and piteous cries, commingle in horrible concert. The opposite shore, to those who are able to reach it, presents a rough, steep ascent, completely eased in ice. Through terror and exhaustion they are unable to clamber up. They tumble and roll back into the river, breaking the ice into still smaller fragments, or else their own half-frozen limbs. They lie bleeding and crippled on the jagged flakes, crying in vain for help. The ear of

compassion is deaf—humanity is extinct in every breast. Those next behind press on, and without compunction or hesitancy step on the quivering and yet breathing bodies of their comrades, and the heel of the yet unscathed, wickedly crushes the face of the exhausted fallen.

The wounded, the women and children on the shore—hear the cries of distress through the silent night; its black veil thrown around the scene, enhances the horror. The madness of despair seizes upon the wretched beings; they run up and down the bank, wringing their hands. Some of them, thinking this torture more intolerable than death itself, throw themselves in blind delirium into the gaping stream; others again, despairing of everything, and most of all, of their own strength, cast themselves howling on the hard frozen ground, cursing their existence, and the day of their birth.

Bianca saw these images of despair and horror around her. For a considerable time she had borne the sight with mute resignation. But at last it became overpowering; she burst into tears and sank on her brother's breast, who ineffectually called all his manly composure to his assistance in order to appear undismayed.

Rasinski, who, being on horseback, and elevated above the rest, regulated everything that remained subject to regulation, came up at this juncture, and addressing his friends, said :

"Be calm, and do nothing rashly, for here I apprehend no danger. It is the panic alone which has seized the soldiers, and is the cause of their destruction. I will remain with my men to the last; do not make any attempt to cross over until I call upon you. Perhaps it may be possible even to convey across the sleds and wagons."

The serenity and collectedness of mind which Rasinski knew how to maintain in the confusion of the most unheard-of exigencies, was a bower-anchor of hope to all. Though he had again disappeared, in order to afford some help to a detachment of grenadiers who had fallen in close by the shore, yet his momentary presence was sufficient to awaken fresh hope and courage.

The disorderly crowds by degrees became disentangled. The troops had at length nearly all crossed; the wagons and artillery alone had not been able to pass. Rasinski's men were the only ones that remained, as escort to a wagon-train filled with the severely wounded. The marshal walked on foot up and down on the bank, still giving his orders. Like the captain of a stranded vessel, he would not leave the wreck as long as a fragment remained.

As a preparatory step, the open places in

the ice were immediately again closed up by other pieces. By dear-bought experience the safest places had gradually become better known. Across those places it was now attempted to pass. With great caution the wagons are brought along. Proceeding some thirty paces, the ice breaks. Then arise agonised cries; the hapless wounded sink, and combat against the current; they fight with each other for the last gasp of their wretched lives. In vain do they call God and men to their rescue! A few moments suffice to plunge them all into eternity!

Ney, deeply affected, walked up and down the inhospitable bank.

"It is impossible for the wagons to cross," he cried, assuming once more the tone of a general. "Spike the guns! All that cannot be carried by hand, leave for the use of those left behind."

This order is no less than a sentence of death to all who cannot trust to their individual strength. The wail of the wounded and helpless ascends up to the sky. All able to stir hand or foot, crawl down towards the horrible passage. The rest in wild phrensy plunder the baggage, because it contains the only preservative against the intense cold—some small stores of viands and stimulants. They carry off the least trifling article, and yet have nothing to spare. They seize an article, throw it away, seize it again, and fling it back after all. Like some frantic people whose property is burning, they run in each other's way, and finish by preserving that which turns out to be valueless. Then they hear the drum from the other shore beating the rappel to march; the dread of being left behind again seizes them, and in wild dismay they again rush towards the river.

Rasinski began now to think of himself and his friends. With sorrow in his looks and voice, he repaired to the sledge on which sat Bianca with Jeannette, closely wrapped up, to avoid witnessing the picture around them.

"Princess," said Rasinski, accosting her, "the stern alternative subjects you to a very severe trial; sledges and wagons cannot be conveyed across the river; but I hope that horses may yet pass. Take all with you that is indispensably necessary. There is no doubt but that we shall soon reach some habitation, where at least, accommodation may be found for ladies."

Bianca rose, threw back her veil, and answered with much emotion:

"You are so good—but I do not fear trials. I feel that I possess courage and strength to endure them. It is only the suffering of these poor helpless creatures that affects me so painfully."

The horses are taken out, and some light

articles thrown over their backs. Willhofen leads one—a Polish soldier, the other. Rasinski goes before them himself; he is best acquainted with the path they ought to follow. Louis and Bernard conduct Bianca between them, while Jeannette is led by Jaromir and Boleslaus; the crossing is effected safely by going three and three; their weight is not ponderous and they can mutually assist each other.

But, as the way down to the river is filled with wagons, and strewed with remnants of baggage and hundreds of unfortunate beings, Rasinski leads his convoy by a somewhat circuitous route. Suddenly Bianca's attentive ear is struck by the cries of a child.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed, "there is a child left helpless behind! If we cannot save others, we must not leave this innocent to perish!"

Her eye is guided by the ear—she listens again, and has finally correctly traced the direction from which the cry proceeds. The poor little creature must be in the midst of the wagons. She hurries to the spot, and does indeed find a child lying wrapped up in straw and abandoned; she takes it up tenderly.

"Poor little creature," she says, in gentle accents, "could thy mother have forgotten thee? I will be thy mother until she returns!"

She takes it into her arms; she will not allow Louis or Bernard to rid her of the sweet burden. She quiets the crying child with her caresses, and soon it rests contented in her bosom.

Boleslaus recognises it; it is Alisette's little daughter.

Once safe over the stream, the friends embraced each other; and then all turned to Rasinski, for they felt that he was their preserver, and pressed around him with feelings of gratitude.

"Look to your Preserver above," he said, lifting his hands towards heaven; "direct your eyes and your hearts to Him who dwells above the stars, and whose eye penetrates the thick darkness and the clouds! Give Him your thanks!"

Suddenly a man came pushing through the crowd near the spot where Rasinski stood. The latter saw that it was Regnard.

"Where bound?" he cried, stopping him.

"Don't detain me!" was his answer, endeavoring to tear himself away. "The poor woman in whose care I left my child was so bewildered by fright, that she entirely forgot it. That child I must save!"

"It is safe already!" cried Rasinski, with gladness.

"How?—where?" Regnard stammered, looking around.

Rasinski in a few words related the inci-

dent, and directed the father to Bianca. She had overheard what had passed, and came to meet him.

Regnard's joy was so excessive upon seeing his child, that he nearly forgot to offer his thanks. The stern iron-strung warrior, the deep and rigid furrows of whose forehead and cheeks were scarcely ever smoothed by a pleasant smile, now stood with a countenance expressive of the deepest solicitude; tears glistened in his eyes.

The troops, meanwhile, had been formed and began to move. Willhofen led up the two horses for Bianca and Jeannette, with blankets for saddles. The women were lifted up and seated upon them. Bianca kept the child before her, and the old servant hitched the bridle-rein over his arm to lead the horses. Bernard and Louis walked alongside on foot, but still kept as near as possible to Rasinski's troop, the greater number of whom, having lost their horses, pursued their way on foot. The march led through a thick forest, in the shelter of whose obscurity the most impending dangers seemed to have been at the last effort, surmounted.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

MEANWHILE, the acutest sorrow prevailed throughout the Grand Army. No hope was entertained that the heroic and devoted Ney would be able to find a way of escape out of the snow-deserts of Old Russia. When the Emperor's guards, led on by himself, as he turned back to save Eugene and Davoust, were obliged to sustain so many terrible conflicts, and when the army of Italy was saved only as it were by a miracle—what hope could there be for those yet two days in the rear with the enemy at their heels, in their front and on both flanks! Gloom and sadness filled every breast. No one seemed even to be grateful for his own preservation, so long as the lion-hearted Ney—certainly the only one adequate to such a command—struggled in the toils of beleaguered enemies. And let us pause here a moment to pay a tribute to the hero of this heroic campaign. We do not envy the feelings of those, be they Russians, or of what country they may, who can read, without profound emotion and admiration, the history of Marshal Ney during the Russian campaign, and especially during its latter and most disastrous portion. When those who previously ranked as the bravest gave in—when pride for thirst and glory were obliterated by extremity of suffering, and by the instinct of self-preservation—when the soldier's

most powerful incentives, discipline, honor, and gain, were forgotten and lost sight of, and even the iron veterans of the Old Guard, no longer sustained by their Emperor's presence, renounced the contest and lay down to die—when his fellow-marshals, with rare exceptions, showed weariness and discouragement, and even the stern Davoust complained that the limits of human suffering were exceeded—where was Ney, what was his aspect, what his words and actions? In rear of the army, a musket in his hand, a smile of confidence on his lips, the fire of his great soul and of his own glory flashing from his eyes, he exposed his life each minute in the day, as freely as ever he had done when he had but life to lose, before his valor had given him riches and rank, family and fame. Surely, so long as valor is appreciated, the name of Ney will be borne in glorious remembrance. And surely those men who subsequently pronounced his sentence of death, must since have sometimes felt remorse at their share in the untimely fate of so great a warrior. "I have saved my eagles!" joyously exclaimed Napoleon, when he learned, at two leagues from Orcha, that Ney was safe, although he brought with him but the ghost of his fine division: "I would have given three hundred millions to avoid the loss of such a man." What would the Emperor have said, had he then been told that three years later, on the 7th December, 1815, the anniversary of one of those days when Ney so bravely breasted the Muscovite torrent, an execution would take place in an alley of the Luxembourg gardens, and that there, by sentence of a French chamber, and the bullets of French soldiers—a premature end would be put to the glorious career of him he had surnamed "The Bravest of the Brave!"

It was night. The Viceroy, still wakeful from protracted cares for the comfort of his men, suddenly hears the clattering of horses in the silent street of the little town. He leans out of the window and listens. Seeing several horsemen approaching, he challenges them by calling:

"Who goes there?"
"Polish cavalry."
"From whence?"
"From the corps of Marshal Ney."

The response strikes like a bright flash through the Prince's heart.

"Where's Ney?—Is he safe?" he asked quickly, almost beside himself.

"He is marching here down the right bank of the Dnieper," answered Rasinski, who had been dispatched in advance by the marshal; "but the Russians are close upon him; he wants assistance."

"He shall have it!" cries the Prince, joyfully, and in a few minutes more he appears

in the street, surrounded by his officers. The call is trumpeted forth, but in what way is it answered? Hardly have the soldiers reached their first place of rest, than they are roused to traverse the wilderness out of which they have but just fought their way! They are deaf to the rattling of the drums. With great difficulty they are roused and pulled out by main strength; they tumble out and tumble back in their warm beds, in a state of half-consciousness. The enemy is perhaps again upon them; let him murder them in their sleep, for resistance or defence they offer no longer.

But there is yet one way left—

"You must go to save Marshal Ney," is shouted in the ears of the sleepers.

That name is a talisman; the mention of him for whom they had grieved as one departed, awakens feelings of exultation in every brave heart; to abandon such a commander were worse than treason. Ney is the champion that dares everything; he is the preserver, when no other human arm can save; he safe, nothing more is to be feared.

The glad news spread from house to house; the soldiers flock together in crowds; every one wants to be the first to succor the hero. Even the generals are emulous of the honor; nothing but his exalted rank enables the Viceroy to establish his claim to priority.

In profound darkness they set out, Rasinski, with his men, riding in the van. But the hostile elements do not even now cease troubling; the wind rises, drives snow in clouds, covering and hiding every path. How are they to preserve the proper direction?—how descry the lost ones in this inexplorable wilderness? For two hours they penetrate deeper and deeper, trusting to chance. They fear even that, by a stroke of ill-luck, they may be running right into the net spread for them by the enemy.

"We are on the ocean here, though its waves are frozen," said the Viceroy; "we must employ the means used by mariners in distress—signal guns."

Three guns are fired at equal intervals, re-echoing their hollow thunder through the night. Now every one listens with eager attention.

For some time all is silent. The hope of the signal being heard dies away. At length distant musket-shots are heard.

"What can that mean?" asked the Viceroy, thrown into fresh perplexity.

"A favorable sign," answered Rasinski; "the third division has no longer any guns; they cannot answer in any other way."

"Noble fellows!" cried Eugene; "they have then understood us. How beautifully caution and intrepidity are blended in Ney!"

He waited to see whether the three guns would be the only ones fired, and thus he arrived at the only possible solution they were meant to convey."

"In the circumstances in which the marshal is placed, there was indeed a great risk incurred by answering the signal," replied Rasinski; "the means betrays himself equally to the enemy. But his eagle glance penetrates the true state of things with consummate skill; he understands how, with a firm hand, to grasp the means of conquest or evasion."

"And this time he will not have been mistaken," proudly exclaimed the Viceroy, as he turned to give his troops the new direction.

The succoring soldiers press on. The clouds disperse; the moon, so frequently a dangerous foe, becomes, on this occasion, the friend of the distressed. She throws her pale light over the snow-hills, and disclosed to view a moving black line bending along the edge of the woods.

"There they are!" cried Rasinski, and the troops hasten their march. Soon they mutually recognise each other; signs of joy are repeated; they eagerly increase their speed; the noble-hearted generals cannot await the moment of meeting; they spur on in advance of their men, and fully recognising each other, leap from their horses and embrace.

The whole army is carried away by this inspiring example. As if each one had the happiness of rescuing a brother, a son, or a father, officers and soldiers rush forward and fold one another in their arms. Dangers, sufferings, sacrifices, are forgotten. A bright star beams at last on the desolate sea of adversity; Russia's frozen steppes and ice-clad plains for once behold a scene from the softened portion of the drama of life.

The hero, who had so successfully, and with a lion's boldness, wrestled with foes and perils on every hand, was surrounded by the soldiers in affectionate and admiring wonder. All willingly lay the meed of praise at his feet; but he to whom duty, honor, and fame have assumed a second nature, seems hardly to know that he deserves it.

He is carried in triumph into Orcha. On the way, the soldiers of the Viceroy share with their new comrades the provisions and liquors they had with them.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

THROUGH the active care of Rasinski, his restored friends were once more in possession of a wagon, on which Bianca, Jeannette, and

the child might pursue their wearisome journey. In order to make themselves as useful as possible in the midst of the common calamity, they took three of the wounded officers also with them on the wagon, one of whom always took his turn in driving the horses. Louis and Bernard walked on foot, as the latter's wound, thanks to his youth and sound constitution, and the superior dressing and nursing which he had enjoyed for the last few days, was now fully healed.

Some days passed with the usual fatigues on the road. The hope that Minsk could now not be very distant, upheld the strength of the army, for there were to a certainty, stores awaiting them in abundance, good quarters, besides reinforcements of fresh and well-disciplined troops. Thus the fragments of the grand army reached Toloczin. From this place they had but just resumed their march on the following morning, when they were met by an officer bearing dispatches from the Emperor. They contained the appalling intelligence that Minsk was in possession of the enemy.

When Rasinski, in his bivouac, learned the news from the lips of Regnard, even he turned pale, and covered his face with his hands, as if to shut out this disaster from his memory. He then uttered these words:

"The Emperor is a prisoner of state."

A gloomy silence reigned throughout the circle.

"That, too, then has fallen upon us," he resumed, at the end of a long silence. "The loss of Minsk, however fearful, might yet be borne, did not the Berezina, with its bottomless marshes, hold us prisoners. A Russian army on the other side, is an iron bolt which hermetically closes the door out of this Tartarus against us."

"There is no hope left," rejoined Regnard, "but that the enemy before us may yet be ignorant of our real situation."

Rasinski incredulously shook his head.

"Do you suppose that Kutusow has not found a messenger to send intelligence to Tschitschagoff, Wittgenstein, and the other generals who command the masses in our rear? They must be blind or mad, if they do not now throw the net over their prey! But one alternative remains to us—a glorious conflict and death. Fortune cannot force us into the path of dishonor; we must dispense with her favors."

The army, after several most fatiguing marches, arrived at Niamanitz. On this dreadful road thousands fell amidst the ordinary suffering and exhaustion, while the intelligence of Minsk being in the hands of the Russians, was, alas! more strongly confirmed. The road led almost uninterruptedly through pine-forests, now and then inter-

spersed with only a few wretched huts. The lead-colored sky seemed frowningly to drop down to the very ground, as if enshrouding the earth in its veil of drizzly mist. It was not very cold, neither did it thaw; but a chill and searching wind kept steadily blowing, penetrating the scanty rags of the men, and slowly congealing their limbs. The ground was cased in a bright, mirror-like crest of ice; every step required a separate effort, and a mis-step or stumble was often followed by the necessity of a farewell to earth, for the poor wretch never rose more.

In the profound obscurity, Rasinski had, with his men, reached an empty house, which one of them accidentally discovered a little aside from the road. A night passed in this narrow, but intact asylum, would have been tolerable, had not the most alarming reports spread about. Regnard, whose iron, unyielding frame no fatigue could shake, and who was indefatigable in collecting all sorts of news, entered late at night to put Rasinski in possession of his budget, but more particularly for the purpose of once more seeing his little daughter, who still received Bianca's care..

"Well, Regnard, what news?" asked Rasinski, who, wrapped up in his cloak, had already laid down to sleep.

"We are fairly trapped," began Regnard. "The bridge at Borisoff is burnt, and the river is so wide, that to reconstruct it cannot be thought of. The opposite shore is covered with enemies; the army of Tschitschagoff is extended to every point where a passage over the Berezina might be effected; in short, to cross that river is impossible."

"One single night of hard frost," cried Rasinski, "and nothing would be more easy."

"But I have good news too," continued Regnard. "Marshal Victor is approaching with twenty thousand fresh troops, which must join us early in the morning. The light cavalry of his vanguard has just come in."

"Only so many more victims!" returned Rasinski, sadly. "True, if it were practicable to cross the river—if the waves of the Berezina were suddenly bound up in ice—in such a case, fresh forces might bring deliverance. And there is still a chance," he continued eagerly, as if a happy thought had occurred to him. "if Tschitschagoff could only be blinded as to the true point! Spurious despatches must be sent out—demonstrations must be made farther down the stream, somewhere about Ukolado and Berezina, and then the passage be suddenly effected elsewhere. Now this may be practicable, as the accession of fresh troops may give us the benefit of a few days' delay.

"Something of that kind is on the tapis,"

answered Regnard; "every measure to that effect has already been taken. The main difficulty is, however, to concentrate the troops at a given point without being perceived. But it is late; good night. You need repose, and so do I; to-morrow, if only once more, I hope we shall meet again."

With these words he was about leaving the hut; but he stopped and cast an affectionate look on his child, which lay fast asleep in Bianca's arms, in a remote part of the room. He stepped near, but very cautiously, so as not to wake the sleepers: "May heaven protect thee!" he said softly; "for ourselves, we must not complain." Saying this, he abruptly left the house. Rasinski and the others again threw themselves on their couch, where they were soon locked in sleep.

The army, on the evening of the following day, reached Borisoff, situated near the banks of the Berezina, which here expands into a wide, swampy lake. The substantial bridge across was entirely destroyed; as the town, but a few days previously, had, by main force, been torn from the enemy's grasp. Borisoff was now garrisoned by Marshal Oudinot. Rasinski obtained intelligence that everything had been done to further the scheme which he would himself have advised. General Laurence, who, as chief of the general staff, was charged with the restoration of the bridges, had sent for several Jews, who acted as spies, to interrogate them respecting the fords. He knew but too well that these worshippers of Mammon would, as soon as they were paid off, betray the whole matter to the enemy, for a similar consideration. Every question and commission entrusted to them was, therefore, worded in such a manner, that they could form no other idea but that the army would, on a sudden, turn southwardly, and down the stream, so as to elude their pursuers, fall in Tschitschagoff's rear, and surprising the enemy, retake the all-important position of Minsk by storm. While these preparations were going on, the corps of Marshal Oudinot set out in the profoundest silence towards Studianka, where the passage was in reality to be made. Rasinski, too, when the men had rested a few hours, received orders to proceed to that place. The strictest orders were given to avoid making the slightest noise during the march; still less was any fire to be kindled, or anything to be attempted by which they might be noticed from the opposite shore; for a chain of Russian videttes was posted all along that shore, whose single watch-fires were seen glimmering on the wooded heights like so many lurid stars.

Rasinski endeavored to persuade Louis and Bernard to separate themselves, with

Bianca, from the troops, and to push their way, as far as practicable, down the river, believing that they would find no great difficulty while under the protection of Bianca—who, anywhere, could appear as a native of the country, to obtain a place of refuge—and, finally, the open road to Warsaw. But the two friends, and more than they, Bianca herself, firmly declared that they, on no account, would separate their fate from that of Rasinski and his men. Willhofen and Jeanette likewise, with the same touching fidelity, strenuously resisted the entreaties of Bianca, urging upon them to adopt these means of safety.

Bernard and Louis proceeded on foot beside the wagon on which Bianca was seated. It afforded them mutual satisfaction to know that they were so near together, and to recognise the faint outlines of each other's persons, though interdicted from speech.

As they drew nearer to Studianka, the watch-fires on the heights became distinct and numerous. This Rasinski observed with regret—as it led to the natural conclusion that a formidable force was stationed on the opposite shore, and that everything was lost, unless they succeeded in deceiving the enemy.

Rasinski reached the rendezvous at Studianka at four o'clock in the morning. Since the preceding night the engineers had been busied in throwing two bridges across the river, which, it was hoped, would be completed before daybreak; so that at least a sufficient number of troops might pass to break a way through the enemy. But this hope was most cruelly wrecked. The river, swollen by the thaw of previous days, had risen several feet, so that the ford by which, on an emergency, the infantry might have pursued their way, had now become too deep even for cavalry. The frost, which had again set in, was sufficiently severe to form cakes of ice, which, drifting with the current, carried everything before them, but did not tarry to unite. The utmost efforts of human ingenuity and toil were therefore frustrated by the rude hostility of the elements.

The pontoniers had thus labored fruitlessly through the whole night, often immersed up to their middles in water. In vain had they combatted against the cold, the trenchant ice, and the impetuosity of the current. Morning was at hand, and yet there was not a single pile standing; for twice had everything been borne down, after being constructed with the most incredible perseverance and care.

As night wore away, and the bridge not completed, nothing was to be expected but that the sweeping fire from the opposite heights would destroy all their slender structures; in which case all hopes must vanish.

Rasinski's troop was encamped on an eminence, close by Studianka. He proceeded in company with Régard to the water's edge, where the generals were engaged in a fruitless consultation, trying to eliminate some means of escape.

There were standing in a group, Mortier, Davoust, Ney, and Eugene, fixing their troubled looks on the opposite bank, from whence shone the Russian camp-fires, like so many flaring meteors of vengeance. Even the intrepid Ney, in heavy displeasure at the fickleness of fortune, threw out this remark:

"If a remedy be found in this case, the Emperor must indeed have fortune chained to his car."

On a sudden, the personage alluded to appeared in the midst of his marshals. He had come with his guards from Borisoff, and when half-way had quietly encamped. Here intelligence was brought to him repeatedly of the unavailing efforts made to complete a bridge. He appeared, therefore, to examine for himself, and at least valiantly wrestle with the evil.

He gave his lieutenants a short, but friendly salutation; then, in his usual precise manner, inquired into every circumstance connected with the object in view.

Rasinski kept his eyes fixed on the earnest but rigid countenance of this wonderful man, who as yet had not yielded to destiny, but only studied new expedients to avoid that extremity. Silence prevailed around them. A sudden thought flashed like lightning upon the mind of Rasinski. If he only were saved, nothing more would be lost than a great army; all France—yea, half Europe—would arm for him! These multitudes are dead, crumble into dust, if not bound together by his iron energy; they are invincible if inspired by his genius. Hundreds of thousands lie already stiff in these sepulchres of snow; what does it matter about a few more or less? He must be saved, and with him all may be restored!

Inflamed by these sentiments, he flies to Marshal Ney, draws him aside, and reveals to him his inmost feelings. The undaunted warrior seizes upon the idea with glowing interest. In his own behalf he would probably never have listened to such a proposition from his inferiors, but he feels now simply as a soldier, and not as a general. "If his safety is attainable," he exclaims, "it must be achieved!"

"I will stake my head on its success!" cried Rasinski, with noble enthusiasm. "I know every winding and turn from this point, and so do my Poles. Every one of them would sacrifice his life ten times over for the Emperor. Farther up by Wenselowa

the river is narrow. We swim across on our horses, and before break of day we can be over. In five days I bring the Emperor to Wilna; there Europe lies open before him, and he can be in Paris before a breath about our destruction can have passed beyond the barriers of Russia. Marshal, entreat the Emperor! His safety is also our own; when Russia learns that he is sending forth fresh armies out of France, we shall at the most be *prisoners of war*; but, should the Emperor share our lot, we shall be *prisoners of state* with him; and you know what a boundless dungeon Russia possesses for such unfortunates."

Rasinski's fiery zeal completely won over the marshal. "He *must* be willing," he cried, eagerly, "and not a moment must be lost!"

The Emperor had just entered a cabin that stood on the bank. Ney runs after him, and there he finds the King of Naples and the Viceroy of Italy. To these he communicates Rasinski's plan. They both receive it joyfully, and resolving jointly to disclose it immediately to the Emperor, follow him into the cabin.

In racking anxiety Rasinski waits for the result. A quarter of an hour passes by. Nobody is to be seen. Already it is beginning to be too late. Already Rasinski is on the point of going in to the Emperor himself, when Ney comes out, walks slowly up to him, and says :

"Count Rasinski, the Emperor cannot be moved to abandon his army. We will tarry here together to await the day, the enemy, and our destruction!"

The abrupt manner in which the marshal spoke proclaimed his deep emotion and the restraint he put upon himself not to betray it. Rasinski stood rooted to the ground. An unspeakable pain shot through his breast, but it was not a warm and softening, but a cold and shuddering feeling. "Did you tell the Emperor—" he began, but was instantly interrupted by the marshal :

"Everything! Everything that reason and affection could suggest; the King of Naples, the Viceroy of Italy, Davoust, Mortier, Rapp, Count Daru, even Berthier—there was nothing left undone short of throwing ourselves at his feet. But there he stood like a rock." "The soldier has placed confidence in me, and I will not betray it," was his only answer."

"And Paris, France, Europe—were these of no weight in the scale?"

"The most pressing danger is here," he said, sharply; "'hence I do not stir until that danger is over.'"

"Then it is too late!" cried Rasinski, nearly beside himself; "permit me once more—"

"No, Count," answered the marshal; "the Emperor does not allow himself to be swayed by entreaties."

Of his great chief's danger Rasinski said no more. However deeply the thought lacerated his bosom, he was equally penetrated by a feeling of lofty admiration for his firmness.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

THE day began to dawn. Through the retreating shadows of night, every eye was endeavoring to count the number of enemies who confronted them. Rasinski and Boleslaus, through cover of the underwood, reached a small elevation from whence they could overlook the river and the windings of its shores. The glow of the Russian watch-fires could be still seen through the morning-mist. All was yet still on the snow-covered heights.

"It seems to me," observed Rasinski, "those fellows should be stirring by this time; or have they withdrawn behind the brow of the hills?"

"As well as I can judge, the watch-fires are abandoned," answered Boleslaus; "at least those nearest to us. Those along the edge of the wood may be patronised."

"Probably they did not choose to be exposed to our artillery," answered Rasinski; "but I do not see their cannon."

They rode a few hundred paces farther on to the summit of a hill nearer the river. The wind had in the mean time scattered the fog, and the air became clear.

"By the great God above!" exclaimed Rasinski, staring around in astonishment, "the position is abandoned!"

"I see some horsemen on the hill there to the right," observed Boleslaus; "they seem also to be reconnoitring. Let us join them."

They repaired thither, and found Ney, Regnard, and some other officers. They shared Rasinski's surprise at finding the opposite shore quite clear of troops. Suddenly Regnard cried out: "I see troops marching over there, towards Borisoff; it is a strong column. Rasinski, you have the eye of a falcon; what do you say; is not that Russian cavalry?"

Rasinski put his hands before his eyes to screen them from the sun just then rising, looked keenly ahead, and exclaimed: "It is artillery and infantry; I see two columns; they are marching towards Borisoff."

"Can it be that our enemy is retiring?" cried Ney, in a tone of incredulity. "It is inexplicable."

"It can no longer be doubted," said Rasinski.

"Then the Emperor's star is yet in the ascendant!" cried the marshal, his eyes radiant with joy; "this must be reported immediately."

They all galloped towards the bridge, where the Emperor was standing, urging and encouraging the workmen.

Officers who had been sent out to reconnoitre now came in from every side. No one had discovered the enemy.

"It seems, then, we have succeeded in deceiving Tschitschagoff," the Emperor remarked. "We must try to catch a prisoner who can give us certain information."

Rasinski offered himself to procure one. He immediately spurred up the stream, accompanied by Boleslaus; took with him a few chasseurs, and swam with them across the river. On reaching the opposite heights, they found all the signs indicating that a considerable force had encamped there over night. Most of the fires were still burning. It was seen that they had been left carefully fed, so that their blaze might deceive the French. The tracks left by the troops were easily discerned, and led in a southerly direction. Rasinski followed the track, rapidly, but with caution; as he emerged from a small patch of woodland, he perceived a few scattered Cossacks on the other side. He attacked them, whereupon they fled; but one of them fell with his horse on the slippery ice, and was seized by Rasinski, who instantly returned with his prize.

On the way, he questioned his prisoner very closely, and learned that, during the night, General Tschaplitz, with ten thousand men and thirty cannon, had occupied the heights opposite Studianka, but towards morning he had, by command of Tschitschagoff, broken up and proceeded over Borisoff, towards Berezino. This confirmation of his conjecture rejoiced his heart, as safety was now within reach, provided the passage could be effected in the course of the day. "Cheer up, Boleslaus!" he exclaimed, "our sun still shines. Fortune has this day shown that she forsakes not the Emperor!"

Rasinski, impatient to impart his information to the Emperor, spurred on his horse, re-crossed the stream, and related what he had seen and acquired.

The Emperor received the intelligence with gratified looks, but with the same composure with which yesterday he listened to the recital of the most untoward mishaps.—He instantly gave orders to push the completion of the bridge to the utmost. The structure was so far advanced that two piers were erected and united by cross-beams; the work must advance rapidly, and General Eble promised to have it completed by noon.

Troops were meanwhile pouring in from all quarters. The town of Studianka itself was crowded with cannon, ammunition-carts, baggage-wagons, and the effects of the Emperor, the marshals, and the other officers; so were also the roads leading to the little place, and the surrounding heights. Rasinski beheld with much concern this disorderly accumulation, which could be accounted for only by the breach of all regulation. To effect anything like order and organization at this moment, seemed an impossibility. The released horses were seen dropping down on the snow, perfectly exhausted, and ravenously devouring chopped half-rotten straw, or whatever else bore the semblance of feed. The drivers had taken refuge in the huts around, or by the fires wherever they could find room. When now this complicated and confused hive should begin to move—when wagons were breaking down, horses falling, the narrow roads blocked up—when haste and eagerness to escape would deprive the people of all sense and reflection—and when, as so often had happened during this disastrous retreat, every person sacrificed the well-being of the whole for personal interest—then it was to be feared, that, however favorable an aspect things had assumed, mischief and terror would reach their acme, and leave an awful monument on the banks of this river. Such were the apprehensions of Rasinski—to be too terribly verified in the event.

Just as he was riding up the hill on which his men were encamped, he heard the dull, sepulchral report of a field-piece in the direction of Borisoff. It was in a few moments followed by the opening of a regular cannonade.

"Dost thou hear, Boleslaus?" he said, "they are fighting yonder. It is to be hoped that the storm will not burst upon us to-day."

Boleslaus listened attentively, and then said: "I do not know whether I am deceived by the wind, but I think I hear artillery firing in the other direction also. There, again! There towards Niamanitza!"

A heavy cloud crossed Rasinski's brow. "It is, then, determined!" he gasped.—"Three Russian armies are on the point of uniting. We have only two days' reprieve!"

The firing became more animated. A serious engagement must have begun. If the Russians should succeed in overthrowing Victor's division, the enemy would press furiously on the rear, and the remnants of the *Grand Armée* would be destroyed.—Rasinski saw that this was inevitable, and full of troubled thoughts he returned to his own troop.

A general rejoicing prevailed here, on ac-

count of the enemy having left the opposite bank. They had heard the distant firing of cannon, but did not think the danger was near.

The firing did indeed cease; and towards noon all was again still. At one o'clock intelligence was brought that the bridge intended for the infantry was finished, and that the Brigade of Legrand, with their artillery, were passing under the eye of the Emperor himself. The other bridge was also nearly completed.

Already there commenced a convulsive stir and pressure among the crowds, as every one wished to be the first in attaining the opposite shore. But the Emperor was still in Studianka; there were too many regular troops on the ground; and the heaps of poor disarmed wandering stragglers were not yet so increased that they could carry all before them in the rush for deliverance. Towards threec o'clock, the cannonading was again heard, but nearer and sharper than in the morning. The fight evidently was approaching; it seemed probable that with the setting in of night the columns would be driven back on Studianka. In the meantime the artillery, with their ammunition-wagons, and some detachments of infantry, were seen in two black files crossing the Berezina. Everything appeared to proceed in such order, that hopes were entertained that the greater part of the baggage and the wounded on the wagons, for which one of the bridges was particularly intended, would be landed on the other side before midnight.

Rasinski now counselled Bernard to keep close to Bianca's wagon in the train of march, so as to escape being drawn into the vortex of confusion, when the arrival of the approaching columns, or perhaps of the enemy, would inevitably create redoubled confusion. Louis and Bernard parted from Rasinski with feelings of anxiety and regret; but they had to consider that he most likely would be among the very last to pass over. Full of dismal forebodings, they bade each other a sorrowful farewell, and accompanied the wagon which was driven by Willhofen down towards the bridge. Twilight came. The file of wagons advanced but slowly; near the river there was an immense crowd of vehicles, among which it was already useless to think of maintaining a line; but each one, as he was able to extricate himself from the mass and to gain the bridge, passed over.

Bianca threw her anxious looks over this tumultuous assemblage of men, horses, wagons and sleds; growling, calling and screeching, increased every minute as night advanced—heightening the agonizing impression made by this indescribable spectacle.

"Oh, my friends," said Bianca to Bernard and Louis, in a gentle tone, "unless you were near me, how soon I would be lost in this dreadful commotion!"

A knot of soldiers now pointed towards the snow-covered hills alongside the river—while the eager talking that prevailed indicated that something important engaged their attention.

The friends could not at first imagine what it might be, but all at once Bernard noticed a reddish glare spreading over the snow, which seemed to enlarge and become brighter every moment.

"Borisoff is in flames!" cried Willhofen.

"Dost thou think so?" said Bernard.

"It can be no other place; it lies right over there, I know!"

The flames shot up higher, and gradually became observable to all who were assembled on the bank, and while the general attention was directed toward this new sight, the din of voices ceased for a few minutes. In this interval the loud pealing of cannon was heard from the same quarter. The contest going on was evidently for the possession of Borisoff—less than two hours' march distant.

The thought that the enemy would come upon them that very night, now made confusion worse confounded. This reflection seemed to spring up simultaneously in every mind. The wagons drove furiously from three different points to the contracted avenue leading to the bridge; they rushed against each other, breaking wheels and axles, turned over, and thus obstructed the road.—Those behind threw themselves in a rage upon those before who were so unfortunate as to break down and block up the way.—Those sitting on the wagons were flung out on the snow without mercy, and the wagons themselves dashed into pieces, to open the path. Horses and men were thrown in heaps on the top of each other, in promiscuous confusion. Howling and raving rent the air. The cavalry came dashing into the midst, trying to restore some order, dealing out heavy blows of the sabre upon those who tried to break in upon the line from without; but hardly were they driven back at one point before three-fold mischief broke in at another. The wounded were thrown under the wheels, uttering piercing cries for help, which were drowned in the savage yells with which those urged on their teams who were near the object of their solicitude, and where one last effort would enable them to attain it.

"Holy father, how is this to end!" exclaimed Bianca, turning pale, and almost unconsciously hugging the crying child firmer to her bosom.

"Be calm, dearest!" said Louis kindly, "this is only a first ebullition of terror; every one must be aware that in this manner they only hasten their ruin."

"Oh, let us rather go back again to Rasinski," she mildly entreated; "I renounce this horrid way of escape over the mangled bosoms of helpless sick and wounded. I had rather meet death from the enemy's cannon than to proceed on this pathway of gore!"

"To return is impossible, Bianca," replied Louis, turning his eyes around. "Look, and thou wilt see how these heights and every path of egress are covered with vehicles and human beings; it were easier to dig a way through the solid rock, than to force one's way through this dreadful labyrinth!"

Bianca sat motionless in mute suffering, keeping her eyes fixed on the child in her lap, which had become quite restless. She caressed the child to keep it quiet. Jeanette sat beside her, more like a corpse than a breathing creature, not venturing to utter a word. Opposite to the women sat two officers, insensible to the horrors that reigned around, by reason of a raging fever, superinduced by some deep wounds in the head. Amid such anguish of fears and troubles, the minutes sped tardily along.

CHAPTER LXXXV.

SUDDENLY a terrible crash was heard, and directly after a loud scream of terror rent the air. Every eye was instantly turned to the place whence the piercing cry came, and every tongue became mute when it was observed that the bridge had broken down under its accumulated burden, tearing away several arches by the concussion. This could be seen only from the higher points nearest the shore; while by far the greater number of those already on the bridge and on the depressed shore, suspecting nothing of the misfortune, pressed on with furious infatuation, pushing those who stood on the brink of the precipice madly into the stream. The unfortunates clung in vain to the fragments of the bridge; in vain they besought pity, with heart-rending cries—there remained no longer a choice; those compassionately inclined were pushed forward, and thus became accessory to the destruction of their comrades, and the next moment were themselves hurled in the same manner into the inexorable element. Fear generated rage and phrensy. Those who

considered themselves lost were turned into sanguinary tigers, drew their swords, and rushed back into the dense mass of their countrymen, to open for themselves a way to the shore. Thus a revolting contest arose, a mad and indiscriminate butchering among friends and countrymen; the retrograding stream of the crowd fought with those pressing forward, through which means a frightful intermingling stagnated on the centre of the bridge. The frightened horses reared or sought for an escape sideways, and thus plunged with the wagons over the broken railing into the stream. Nothing was audible but cries of distress, agony and rage.

The true state of things became, of course, finally known. A deep and anxious silence prevailed while the bridge was being repaired. It would seem that the disaster just witnessed ought to serve as an impressive lesson to the surviving; every thing possible was done to enforce more regular order. But now the obscurity of the night increased the difficulty of piloting the interminable crowds, the smallest portion of whom alone could know what had taken place. Every one was led to his fate as it were blind-folded, and the bandage was not torn from his eyes until he found himself struggling in the turbulent waters.

Suddenly the distressing noise and tumult which ascended from the bank of the stream, was interrupted by a loud firing of cannon. The flames of burning Borisoff rose higher in forked tongues; the glowing lava of the battle seemed to come slowly rolling on from that quarter. While they were listening to the thunder of this hurricane, another volcano commenced belching forth flames and death from another side.

This second engagement had undoubtedly commenced just before the gates of Studianka, or perhaps on the heights where Rasinski was stationed, as the clangor of the conflict was heard close at hand. This supposition was strengthened by the appearance of aids galloping to the Emperor, who still tarried with composure on the shore. Other messengers were sent back in haste—everything demonstrated that important events were transpiring.

The utmost efforts were used to repair the bridge, but still the Emperor dispatched officers, one after another, to hasten on the work. The cannonading continued in the meantime with short intervals, but did not come nearer.

It was past midnight. The unfortunate creatures on the shore had mostly sunk into slumber, from the over-taxed exertion of their physical powers; but cold and hunger, and above all, a cutting north-easter, which became more and more violent, freezing everything it touched, soon impelled them to

seek for other shelter. They hid themselves under the wagons, crept in between the horses, to thaw their frozen limbs by the animal heat, and piled themselves in heaps one upon another. On a sudden a red glare illumined this sad night-piece, casting a blood-tinged reflection over the snowy hills. On looking around, the village of Studianka was seen in a blaze. Those unfortunates from the heights by the river, who had been able to crawl back thus far, had sought shelter in the village ; but the huts were crowded to overflowing, and the bitterness of the cold night augmented with the wind. There was no wood near to be found, and consequently, driven to desperation, they tore down the miserable houses over the heads of those who had taken refuge within them, and made fires from the roofs, planks and boards, to warm themselves by.

The Emperor was highly incensed at this conduct, which tended to betray to the enemy the place where the passage over the river was constructing, and thus bring about the destruction of the whole. But the deed was done.

The regular troops defiled the whole night over the uninjured bridge ; and it was now used for the transportation of artillery also, while the other was closed and under repair. It was hoped that when these repairs were completed, the passage would be effected with more order, both because the crowd on the bank had somewhat diminished, and also because recent sad experience would serve as a lesson for the future. But then a fresh cause of mischief showed itself ; a long file of wagons, laden with soldiers grievously wounded, followed by women and others less severely injured, on foot, arrived unexpectedly at the rendezvous. They were all the very images of wretchedness, tormented by cold, hunger and disease, and excruciating bodily pains. All were astonished, and ask whence they came ? From Borisoff, where in the night the greater portion of General Parthouneau's brigade had been made prisoners by the enemy. The rest had succeeded in effecting their escape ; they retreated before the pursuing Russians, preceded by these wounded creatures, and an infinite multitude of disarmed, half-starved stragglers, all coming to seek safety here.—Scarcely were these explanations elicited, when dense black columns were seen covering the heights and the bank of the river.

It is observed by the faint light from the burning huts of Studianka, and by the glimmer of the snow and the stars, that there are many thousands drawing near in irregular bands. No sooner do these behold armed fellow-soldiers before them, from whom they hope to receive shelter and protection, than

they rush in their midst in wild commotion and haste, as if the enemy were already at their heels. With uplifted hands, and sunken cheeks, pale, reeling from cold, terror and exhaustion, the savage glare of ravenous pinching hunger in their looks, these unhappy creatures, in hoarse, moaning accents, beg for food and a shelter. Touched with commiseration, no one at first is willing to repulse them ; but they press in ever-increasing numbers so violently onward as to break the orderly ranks of the soldiers, and carry confusion before them among the troops ; and when finally they get a view of the bridge before them, they rush in delirious haste to this plank of safety, and thus threaten a repetition of yesterday's tragedy. At this moment, fresh intelligence of the approach of the Russians comes in, and as it is also reported that the wagon-bridge is again in serviceable order, the Emperor orders the Guards to pass over on both bridges. He mounts his horse, and places himself at their head, in order to gain the opposite shore, and march to Brilowa—for even there, alas ! the enemy's presence is expected. This order to march sets every thing in motion. Every one thinks that the propitious moment for securing his own safety has arrived, and consequently they push and worry, including the late comers, half-insane from fear, to gain access into the narrow avenues leading to the bridges. No arguments or opposition can stop them ; the well-knit ranks of the Old Guard are broken asunder ; strange wagons crowd in among their train of artillery ; all order again disappears—and the most inextricable confusion threatens the destruction of all. The Emperor's authority even fails to open him a passage. The approach to the first bridge is encumbered and choked up by stragglers and wounded, baggage-wagons, women and children—and the living surge press on so furiously and perseveringly, that no passage can be effected without resorting to violence. Stern necessity gives birth to the most terrible resolves. Troops of cavalry must charge upon the mad, unhappy multitude, and repel them with the edge of the sword. With shuddering reluctance they execute the order which compels them to shed the blood of helpless comrades, and to mangle their falling bodies with the horses' hoofs. Piercing cries of anguish, which drown even the shrieking northerly blast, rend the welkin, and as if to push horror to extremity, the thunder of the enemy's guns is heard once more. The path is now open. A detachment of cavalry rides forward ; then follows the Emperor, surrounded by his officers, the guards closing up behind ; but the nearer and louder the hostile cannon on the

heights roar, the more vehemently crowds of fugitives press upon the troops. Nothing but their compact and well-directed front of resistance can keep them at bay—and hundreds are destined to fall in the sickening and unnatural contest.

With first dawn of morn the last columns reach the bridge, and the sable curtain of night is gradually withdrawn from the picture, revealing to the eyes of day the secrets it has helped to conceal. Mangled and mutilated bodies, broken pieces of gun-carriages and wagons, dead horses, who in their last agony had rolled over still bleeding human remains, were strewed everywhere, covering the deep declivities which descend to the stream in the vicinity of the bridge. Half-immersed wretches are seen jammed in between the pieces of ice drifted and stationary along the rocky shore. When the sickened eye turned away from these objects of horror, it recoiled yet more appalled from beholding the living covering the shore; for it could discover nothing but an immense congregation of spectres, from whose sunken and half-extinguished eyes gleamed the phrensy of despair; running against each other, weeping, and vomiting forth howls and curses—writhing under their own sufferings, but impregnable to those of their brothers. Every step and movement among them is dictated solely by an unbridled animal instinct of self-preservation. Many are, however, among them who can no longer summon up strength of body or will to attempt this, but sit like corpses motionless on the ice-bound earth, staring fixedly before them on the spot which is so soon to be their grave. The outcries of woe and pain proceeding from crushed and dismembered wretches, or from those who had been plunged into the river and carried away by its crashing icebergs, the blasphemies and yells of the most hardened, who, scrambling over the remains of their fallen brethren, cleared an outlet for themselves, were the only sounds to be heard in this great slaughter-house, and the only attendants on the last wild and agonizing throes of vitality.—But the scene was to assume a yet more terrific character. All of a sudden, peals of thunder, like those of the Last Judgment, burst over the devoted heads of these victims. Those even who had sunk into the very depth of hopelessness, were started out of their apathy. They saw the hills around them reeking with black columns of smoke; the battle raged over their heads. As if a demon of blindness and panic terror had burst in upon them, and chased them into indiscriminate flight, they now rolled in dense masses towards the river and the bridges, void of all forethought or calculation

about the possibility or likelihood of escape. And as if the caverns of the earth had opened, the advancing torrent was multiplied by floods of fugitives, who, worsted by the murderous conflict, came pouring down from the heights around Studianka and Borisoff.

Bianca, almost fainting from terror and pain, slowly turned her head toward the sulphurous heights.

"Dost thou think, my brother," she asked Bernard in a low tone, as if fearful of hearing the answer, "dost think that the noble Rasinski is present in this engagement?"

"It cannot be otherwise, sister," answered Bernard.

"Then my heart bids him its last adieu!" she said in a tone of gentle firmness.

"Why so?" demanded Louis.

"Oh, my dearest friend!" answered Bianca, "I do certainly devoutly put my trust in God; but it seems like presumption, in my view, to hope for our own rescue out of this all-consuming vortex, and equally so that he should escape out of the raging contest."

His sister's rising sorrow and despondency stimulated the fortitude in Bernard's bosom. "Be of good courage!" he replied; "thou hast hitherto never played a game where the stakes are one against one. I have just as much hope of winning as of losing. And our game stands prosperously, for we have at least cast our anchor here in the snow, and our moorings will prove staunch against those mountain torrents that come rushing down. They must exhaust themselves some time or other, and then we will have elbow-room enough."

"It looks like it with a vengeance!" ventured Willhofen, as he pointed to a hill which commanded the valley, and on which a battery of flying artillery just then drew up.

"Can those be Russians?" asked Bernard, the words faltering on his lips.

He had barely uttered these words when a flash was seen from the first gun, and in five seconds the dull sound of the report reverberated among the snowy hills all around.—Immediately the ball struck with destructive fury right among the thickest part of the crowd before the bridge—when they scattered, terrified, on every side. They had no time left them to collect their senses and form an estimate of their new terror, for a second shot followed directly, and then a whole salvo, which tore open the most frightful gaps.

Bianca held both hands before her face and breathed convulsively. Louis and Bernard went up to her, endeavoring to quiet her by gentle persuasives and consolation. Jeanette sat pale and trembling; she could not speak, though her lips quivered, as if she

wished to do so. The child nestled itself, frightened, in Bianca's bosom.

All at once, occurred a crashing and pealing like the shock of an earthquake. A round shot had struck the fore part of the wagon, torn it in pieces, and thrown the two officers, dreadfully mangled, to the ground.

The frightened horses reared furiously, and would have upset the carriage had not the pole and fore-axle been in splinters. Willhofen sprang forward to hold them ; Louis and Bernard hurried to his assistance. With streaming hair, Jeannette had already leaped from the cart, and Bianca, unconscious of what she did, followed her example, still closely clasping the infant.

"Is it alive?" cried a voice, and at the same moment she felt herself seized from behind. She turned, and Regnard stood before her, his right arm in a sling : he had just made his way through the crowd of carts.

"Oh ! I have you then at last," he tenderly exclaimed, kissing and caressing his child as she lay in the arms of Bianca—who, stunned with terror and the recent shock, scarce thought of wondering at his unexpected appearance.

"You here, colonel!" cried Bernard. "How and whence came you?"

"From the fight up yonder," replied Regnard. "'Tis awful work ; our fellows stand like the walls of Troy ; but all must soon be overthrown, for the Russians bury us under their bullets."

"Did you see Rasinski?—Is he alive?—And Boleslaus and Jaromir?"

"They fight like lions, like devils, those Poles ; but it's all in vain, we cannot hold out another hour. And this defile over the bridge looks about as tempting as the jaws of hell!"

"You are wounded, colonel?"

"My right arm shattered. My horse was knocked over by a shell ; I dragged myself as far as Studianka to seek a doctor, and found ashes and corpses, no longer of use in the fight. I thought I would have a trial to cross the bridge. I saw these carriages from above : I knew you had driven up here yesterday. If I could only find you, I thought, and get a last look at my little daughter ! Laugh at me, if you like—but the thought came like a whisper from heaven. 'Perhaps it is the last wish you will see fulfilled,' said I to myself. And as if some invisible guide had led me, I made my way to your very carriage, just as the twelve-pounder played you the trick. Only see now how hearty the child is ! it grows like its mother ! Ah ! if I only had something for you, poor darling ! Were we but in Paris, that I might give you a pocketful of bonbons !"

And in fondling and chattering with the infant, he forgot both his crushed arm and the destruction that raged so actively around. The storm of shot had no terrors for him ; twenty battles had accustomed him to it. But the sweet emotions of paternal love were new to him, and a secret voice seemed to warn him that he would not long enjoy them.

Louis now came up and greeted the colonel. Bianca gave the child to Jeannette, for Regnard, with only one arm, could not hold it, and she felt that her strength was giving way amidst this complication of horrors. She leaned against the wheel of the carriage. Bernard observed her faltering, and encircling her tenderly with his arm, he kissed her pale cheek.

"See yonder woman," he said ; "take pattern by her ! See, dearest sister ! how calm she is amidst the ravages of death !"

About twenty paces off, a tall female figure sat upon a horse, a child of three years old in her arms, and gazed steadily at the tumult. A black veil was twined round her head, but left her noble and striking countenance exposed. She could but just have arrived, otherwise her appearance was too remarkable not to have attracted attention, even in that hour of confusion when few thought of anything but their danger.

"Calm?" said Bianca, after a long look. "calm, say you ? Petrified, you should say. See you not the tears that roll over her rigid countenance, and the despairing gaze she directs to heaven ? Alas ! poor woman !"

"She is the widow of Colonel Lavagnac," said Regnard ; her husband fell three weeks ago at Viazma ; the child in her lap is her daughter."

All eyes were fixed in pity on the mourning figure, when a cannon-ball boomed through the air, and struck her and her horse to the ground. A cry of horror escaped the bystanders. The unhappy woman had disappeared. One could not see her for the throng. Bernard, Louis, and Regnard forced a passage through the mob of men and horses, but with all their efforts, their progress was slow. Bianca followed them, led partly by pity and partly by fear of separation from her protectors.

Silent and uncomplaining, the lady sat upon the ensanguined snow—her tall, dignified form supported against an overturned cart, her child clasped in her arms. The shot had shattered both her feet, but her infant appeared unhurt, and anxiously clasped its mother's neck with its little hands. None thought of succoring the poor creatures ; all were too engrossed with their own selfish misery—and few vouchsafed her more than a passing glance as they struggled onwards. She would hardly have escaped being

trampled under foot, had not her wounded horse, lashing out convulsively in the agonies of death, cleared a space around her. Whilst Bernard supported his trembling sister, Louis and Regnard attempted to climb over the cart which intervened between them and the wounded lady. But at that moment the noble sufferer took a strong hair-chain from her neck, twisted it, before any could stay her hand, around her infant's throat, and with a sudden exertion of strength drew it tight. The little creature drooped its head and fell strangled on its mother's knees. In a last frantic convulsion, the unhappy parent clasped her child to her bosom, gave an agonised sigh, a glance to heaven, and fell back, dead ! At that moment, Louis and Regnard reached her, but it was too late. Bianca hid her face in her brother's bosom.

Meanwhile, the fire from the Russian battery was incessant ; balls and shells crashed against the bridge, and into the midst of the multitude. The fighting in the rear, also, from the side of Studianska, drew nearer and nearer, and it was to be feared that the implacable enemy would soon be upon them from that quarter too. Thus commingled—the thunder of cannon, the cries of the wounded and half-shattered victims,—the screams of those perishing in the river, and the roar and yells of those, who, in desperation, sought by violence to break open a way of escape.

The balls struck again close to the spot where Bianca was with her friends, so that Willhofen had much ado to keep the horses from running away. Regnard caressed his child at intervals, and then calmly watched the progress of the battle. Not a moan or a word was heard from him on account of his crushed arm.

A shell struck right in the circle of the friends, scattering the ice and all around it, and finally burying itself in the ground.

"Down, down, all of you!" shouted Regnard, but the monster exploded instantly, amidst a cloud of flame and smoke, projecting the pieces violently on all sides. Cries of terror resounded every where ; the atmosphere itself seemed to hiss and bellow. Bernard felt that he was unhurt, his sister, whom he held in his arms, the same ; but a thick volume of smoke environed his head, so that he could not perceive any of his friends.

"Louis," he called ; "Louis, art thou alive?"

"Thou livest!" was heard in the voice of Louis, and in an instant he was at Bianca's feet. But suddenly he tore himself away, and sprang up, exclaiming—"Holy Father, that too?" His eye fell upon Willhofen, who was lying dreadfully mangled between the horses. The face only was injured ; his

bursting eye sought anxiously for some friendly hand to close it. Louis ran to him, and raised his head. Bernard seized his right hand, kneeling before him. "Art thou yet alive ? Canst thou yet bid us a farewell !" cried Louis, in a voice choked with grief. But the dying man only moved his lips faintly, and tried to give a pressure of the hand in token of gratitude. A painful smile flitted over his face, his head sank back, and he expired.

They tried to raise the body, but another discharge from the Russian batteries scattered a host of balls and shells among the crowd close by them. Another howl of terror arose ; every thing huddled together, one on top of another, and the billows of flying masses came now rolling this way.

"Let us keep together!" cried Regnard—"once separated we shall never meet again!" And he stretched out his hand to grasp that of Louis, when a ball passed between them, overthrowing the colonel.

"Regnard!" cried Louis, springing to his assistance, "are you badly hit?"

Bernard raised the wounded man by the shoulders, and bent over him.

"I have got my allowance," said Regnard, faintly. "Where is my little daughter?"

Shuddering, but with resolute step, Bianca came forward, the child in her arms. She kneeled beside the dying soldier, and held it out to him. Regnard looked mournfully at the little creature, so soon to be an orphan.

"Farewell!" he said, kissing it for the last time. "You have no longer a father—but a mother—has she not?" added he, imploringly, to Bianca. "Greetings to Rasinski, if he shall live to receive them. Long live the Emperor!"

Upon this last exclamation, uttered in a hoarse, soldier-like tone, the final breath of the dying man was expended. The next instant his soul had fled !

But there was no time granted to indulge in grief—for a terrible roar and rattle in their neighborhood, mixed up with howls and screams, and a crowd and pushing of fugitives carrying every thing before them, drove them from the ground.

"Get out of the way of this avalanche!—it will swallow us up!" cried Bernard. "Let us fly to the heights, where we can breathe!"

Louis took hold of Bianca ; Bernard tore the bewildered Jeannette away with him. Leaving every thing behind, they only sought to escape from the danger of the moment. They succeeded, fortunately, in gaining a more open spot on one side, to which the crowd did not rush, as the bridge could not any longer be reached from thence, and no one thought of seeking safety but by this means.

"Here we have air!" cried Bernard, as, breathless, he reached the place; "the stream of people rolls that way. "Here nothing worse can reach us than the shots from the enemy, or be made prisoners of war. He cannot well be more merciless than that tiger-like fury which rages there below!"

The most trying moments had now come, for flying portions of the army rushed down from the heights of Studianka. The artillery at a full trot rattled down the icy declivities—the horses being unable to hold back the guns. There being no alternative, they drove right in among the unfortunate crowd. The wheels of the heavy gun-carriages dashed over a pavement of dead bodies, and the fractured limbs and bones of thousands yet living. Cries of murder and distress seemed to issue from the very bowels of the earth. Horses, guns, tumbrils, and human beings rolled in inextricable confusion down the steep declivities towards the river.

Prayers and curses, lamentations, and ravings of wrath and madness, intermingled in a loud, uproarious noise, hardly overmatched by the thunder of the artillery and the crashing of the shot. The wind howled furiously, throwing up the snow in whirling clouds, and driving before it the foaming billows of the black stream. The powers of the elements seemed to struggle with the energies of man with a fearful tenacity.

On the bridge itself the spirit of terror and insubordination ruled triumphant. Safety and destruction were here running parallel on the narrowest ledge of the precipice. The foot did not tread upon corpses, but on living creatures, who, half-crushed, writhed in wildest contortions. The flood eagerly opened its ravenous jaws, devouring thousands of victims, thrust without pity into the treacherous element. An inhuman contest arose at this point. Brothers forced their way over the bodies of brothers, trampling their faces under their feet.

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

THE hindmost of the troops, who had fought the recent battle, were pouring down the heights in thick columns. On seeing the bridge and the adjacent banks so overcrowded with fugitives that it was utterly impossible to break themselves a path in that direction, they turned upwards against the stream, to reach the opposite shore, either by swimming or wading over. This stream of mortals also threatened to overwhelm the spot pitched upon by Bernard. Louis

was the first to observe this, and urged the others before him to seek refuge higher up towards the source of the river. This was done in tumultuous haste, as fast as the, through fright and anxiety, overstrained powers of the women permitted. But even here nature was adverse to them, for the wind beat right into their faces, and blinded them with the driving snow. Many, despairing of escape by means of the bridges, followed after them, and thus a crowd flowed in on that point also. From the heights came pouring down cavalry, foot-soldiers, wagons and field-pieces, pell-mell. These two torrents soon merged into one, and now the wild destructive pressure commenced afresh. Bernard called out to Louis: "Follow me; let us push further up towards the hills; where no one seeks safety, is the place for us to find it!"

To do this it was necessary to permeate the rushing torrent of fugitives, which subjected them to the encounter of a sharp conflict; panting and breathless, almost bereft of their last ebbing strength, they finally gained the limits of the crowd. They proceeded rapidly across a slippery descent; here again a hostile fate lurked in their path. Two field-pieces came down the hill on the same icy descent; the horses slipped their foothold, and were about falling. Nothing can save them but making them rush blindly on. Impelled by furious lashings of the whip, and urgent shouts, the horses dashed away at full gallop directly towards the spot where Bernard stood. He endeavored to spring on one side, and, at the same time, to pull Jeannette along with him; but, alas! it was too late. The leaders came in contact with him, and hurled him, together with the girl, to the ground.

Uttering a piercing shriek, Bianca swooned and fell.

A gentle voice reached her ear, uttering, "Sister, oh, my sister!" It is the voice of Bernard. She opens her eyes. Bernard is unhurt, kneeling at her side.

Love, grief, and alarm, all find vent in a flood of beneficent tears; forgotten is every grief—forgotten the evils yet in store.

"Then no new victim has been sacrificed?" she ejaculates, trying with kisses of joy to seal Bernard's lips. But he keeps her off with a serious mien, saying:

"Yes, one has bled, though from me a gracious Providence diverted the destruction. Jeannette has found her death; her devotedness, like that of our Willhofen, will find its reward only on the other side of the grave!"

"Jeannette killed!" cried Bianca, shuddering. "Where, where is she?"

"Oh, do not ask to see her," Bernard entreated, while he tried to prevent her from

turning around, for the body lay behind her ; "she died too shockingly!"

But it was already done. Following with her eye the tracks of blood visible on the snow, Bianca discovered the inanimate remains ; she recoiled shuddering at the distressing sight. The wheel had passed over the girl's head and breast, frightfully tearing and disfiguring the youthful, blooming countenance. The blood still oozed and trickled from the wounds, mingling with her light brown tresses, which lay dishevelled and loose on the snow.

With hurried steps they now continued their flight up the stream. A sweeping curve in its course threw the bridge and the crowds out of sight, and they now heard only the dull reports of the enemy's guns. Their path led them through a wintry solitude. To the left was the Berezina, full of its floating masses of ice ; on the right were the heights from which the piercing blast chapped their hands, and drove the snow in their faces. But still this rough, inhospitable reception was friendly, compared with the scenes out of which they had escaped.

But soon they must find some shelter, or their strength would entirely forsake them, for Bianca was altogether faint and exhausted. Bernard inspired fresh hopes by remarking that they could now not be far from Weselowa. Even should they find none but Russians there, their safety would be ensured—as Bianca, by Bernard's advice, was to announce herself to them as a Russian lady, on her flight from the French, and Louis and himself as foreign retainers of her household. Should they fall in with French troops, it devolved on the men to obtain help and protection.

They had continued their wearisome progress for more than an hour, and still the much longed-for Weselowa was not in sight. Louis then directed Bernard's attention to some straggling horsemen who made their appearance on the heights. Bernard's keen eye saw directly who they were, and he exclaimed : "Those are Cossacks ; I know them by their lances ; if these rapacious villains should fall upon us, nothing could prevent our being stripped of everything. It is a matter of indifference to the marauder, whether he plunders friend or foe, as long as he can do it with impunity. Let us creep as near the shore here below as possible."

This was done with the utmost haste, but still it was without avail, for the Cossacks had already espied them, and galloped after them, in pursuit, as it seemed. But fortunately there was another bend in the river, which carried them out of sight from their pursuers ; at the same time they beheld in the distance the snow-covered roofs of Weselowa.

But the last hurried effort had completely exhausted the little remaining strength that Bianca could muster ; she sank on her knees, exclaiming : "I can no more ! oh, do you flee, and save yourselves, and leave the child with me ; I shall find compassion among these wild hordes !"

"We will carry thee !" cried Bernard ; "our strength will enable us to reach yonder huts." And instantly Louis, with himself, had her lifted up, attempting a thing impossible. After taking a few steps they had to relinquish the task, as they sank into the deep untrodden snow.

"Flee, I beseech you, brother!—and thou, my beloved, flee ! It is the only means of securing your safety and mine ; stay here, and we all perish together !"

At this moment the sound of horses' feet was heard. One minute more, and their fate would be determined. They did not look up, but held each other in a close embrace.

The riders came galloping towards them ; when quite near they halted, and a voice called out in Russian : "Hallo ! is that Weselowa yonder ?" Bianca started joyfully as she heard these words ; with a penetrating cry, she exclaimed, "Great God ! Rasinski !"

With boisterous rapture, Louis and Bernard sprang up, and instantly Rasinski was off his horse and in their arms. Boleslaus and Jaromir also hastened to embrace their friends. "You live ! you live ! and here we find you !" was heard from every mouth, while the heart could scarcely contain itself for the unspeakable happiness it felt.

The momentary ferment was over, and to this succeeded a quiet hilarity, much like a river which, after plunging down in a thundering cataract, glides along with placid flow, reflecting the fleecy clouds in its mirror-like face.

There was no lack of sad and painful retrospects. The untoward fates of Willhofen, Regnard, and Jeannette were recounted. Rasinski listened with heartfelt attention. He then turned around, pointed to his handful of followers, and said, in deeply-moved accents : "These are all I bring out of that murderous conflict ! We cut our way through, and came hither in flight ! To save us from losing any more friends, let us go on ; there lies Weselowa. I trust we shall be able to cross the river ; once on the other side, I think we are safe !"

He lifted the exhausted Bianca and the child on his own horse, leading it by the bridle. Boleslaus and Jaromir offered theirs, also, to Louis and Bernard, which they declined, for they felt themselves yet strong enough to pursue their way on foot.

In an hour more they reached the hamlet.

A Lithuanian peasant guided them to a ford where the river was not quite the depth of a man. Notwithstanding that the ice was drifting in large masses, they courageously ventured into the current. Rasinski sat behind one of his men; Bernard and Louis did the same behind Jaromir and Boleslaus. They reached the opposite shore in safety, and thus finally rescued, they lifted their hearts and eyes in profound gratitude to heaven.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

RASINSKI and his friends pursued their way to Zembin. Here he found Marshal Ney, on whom still devolved the most difficult task—that of covering the retreat. The worst of the fatigue and suffering seemed, however, to have passed—for they now found themselves in a region that was not utterly laid waste, in which the inhabitants were more favorably disposed. A high-wrought desire for deliverance caused the smallest glimpses of hope to be looked upon as the consummation of all their desires; but the implacable animosity of fortune was not yet appeased. It slumbered only in order to regain strength.

Louis succeeded while at Zembin in obtaining a small sled, affording room for two persons, which was consigned to Bianca. Rasinski had a horse harnessed to it, transferring the rider to the office of driver. Bernard and Louis tried in vain to persuade Bianca, now that it was practicable, to gain a stage in advance, so as to reach Wilna, the longed-for haven of safety. She was not to be moved from her purpose, never for a moment to leave her brother or lover.

Anything like organization in the army was no longer to be thought of. Every one joined that division or detachment in which he expected to find most security, or which he fell in with accidentally. Rasinski again attached himself to Ney—partly from preference towards the marshal personally, partly because his military ambition prompted him always to seek the perils of battle, as being more meritorious.

During the progress of the first few days, the enemy pressed, but not very eagerly; swarms of Cossacks, which were dispersed by a single cannon-shot, were the only ones finally that molested the retreat.

But the day arrived for which that most inveterate enemy of the army—the Russian winter—seemed to have treasured up all his wrath. On the night of the 3rd of December, the wind suddenly veered round from a south-westerly to a cutting north-eas-

terly bearing. On its wings were borne the terrors of the North Pole—to the destruction of these last fragments of a once proud and gigantic host. Winter, lurking spitefully, had half-concealed itself behind a veil of comparative mildness. Now he had stolen upon them under cover of a dark night, and fallen upon the defenceless victims in their sleep. Pinched with acute pain from his freezing touch, they opened their eyes, and the pitiless monster stood before them in all his dread-inspiring deformity.

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All awoke at the summons, but were for some time unable to move.

"You must rouse yourselves," cried Rasinski, "else you are gone! To-day rises the sun of a real winter's morning. He has only played wolf with us until now!"

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The resolute woman suppressed her pain and troubles. "I am very well, brother," she answered; "I am more used to this climate than thou. And we are besides so well provided with clothing."

"Keep close together, friends!" Rasinski exhorted them: "in this hive one may be easily separated."

Bernard and Louis supported Bianca, who carried Alisette's child, closely enveloped in furs, between them. Rasinski, with Boleslaus and Jaromir, went before. The remaining soldiers of the regiment followed on behind. Thus, after stumbling over many that were lying on the ground and groaning piteously, they reached the open air. The snow creaked crisp under their feet; the air seemed to be impregnated with needles, which, in breathing, struck painfully on the lungs. Eyes, lips and cheeks began to tingle and smart the moment they came in contact with the wind.

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A majestic figure stood upon an eminence, covered with a fur cloak, yet beating his arms to keep himself warm. It was Marshal Davoust. In a loud voice, he cried, "This way—first division—this way!"

A small number dilatorily assembled around him—the residue of his entire corps, having been lost in dangers innumerable by this hardened and persevering soldier, whom no suffering or peril could force to relinquish hope, so long as it depended on the laws of discipline or order. At the head of his men he proceeded on foot, sharing every fatigue with the soldier and every comfort with the officers, to which his rank entitled him, even in these levelling times.

Rasinski had fortunately found shelter for his horses, but two of them had died from the cold. They mounted. Bianca stepped into her little sled, while Louis and Bernard walked as near to her as practicable, and were joined by the two now dismounted troopers of Rasinski's regiment.

Thus the fugitives were once more on their way; they heard nothing but the sharp crisping of the snow, the dull rumbling of the artillery, and the hollow groans of those who, with death coursing in their congealed veins, fell to rise no more.

These unfortunates were seen tottering and staggering about like drunken men; then sinking down on their knees, the paralyzed tendons of which refused any longer to sustain them.

Others laughed like maniacs at the sight of misery around them, and shouted a mocking, demoniac farewell to those who fell. It was only nobler and more courageous natures that preserved a manly composure. Rasinski maintained his equanimity. His horse, which he had been leading by the bridle, sunk from cold and exhaustion. He took the pistols out of the holsters, and continued his way as if nothing had happened. Jaromir and Boleslaus, who also were on foot, leading their horses, in vain urged him to make use of one. He refused.

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dately got out, but it availed nothing. Twice the animal tried its best; Louis, Bernard, Jaromir, Boleslaus and Rasinski assisting. But it was fruitless labor; the poor beast was no longer able to drag itself along; it fell to the ground, and in a few minutes was rigid. Undismayed, Bianca said to her friends who stood around her: "Now I can share in your hardships, and it will not come hard to me. In this severe cold it is better to walk."

Bernard answered nothing. Silently he took the child from her arms and carried it. Louis supported his betrothed, and they wandered silent and sorrowful together.

They took a path running parallel with the road, as it seemed more easy to travel, and where they were not so much crowded; it had been trodden by only a few individuals. Bianca and Louis went before. Bernard followed at some distance with the child, whose unconscious glee and prattle—Bianca having carefully protected it against the cold—afforded a strange and affecting offset to the surrounding horrors. "Thou art a butterfly that plays and flutters within the open jaws of a shark," said Bernard to himself; "but I had just as lief see thee here, as to see thee stroking the spotted skin of a sleeping tiger. Dost laugh, thou little rogue?"

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"Stop, dog!" it exclaimed. "Your cloak, or I shoot you dead!"

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"What would you, wretched man?" cried Bernard, horror-struck, and stepping backwards. The child screamed with terror, clasped its arms around him, and hid its little head in his breast.

"Your warm cloak, or I shoot you down!" shouted the frantic soldier. "No more comrades here! I've as good a right to save myself as you!"

Bernard saw himself almost alone with the assassin; although thousands were within hail, the bullet would be quicker than their aid, supposing even that one amongst them had sufficient pity for another's peril, to turn aside for a moment, and thus lengthen his journey and sufferings by a few painful paces. There was nothing for it but to yield to the menace and give up his warm wrapper, although he well knew that with it he gave up his life.

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A Lithuanian peasant guided them to a ford where the river was not quite the depth of a man. Notwithstanding that the ice was drifting in large masses, they courageously ventured into the current. Rasinski sat behind one of his men; Bernard and Louis did the same behind Jaromir and Boleslaus. They reached the opposite shore in safety, and thus finally rescued, they lifted their hearts and eyes in profound gratitude to heaven.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

RASINSKI and his friends pursued their way to Zembin. Here he found Marshal Ney, on whom still devolved the most difficult task—that of covering the retreat. The worst of the fatigue and suffering seemed, however, to have passed—for they now found themselves in a region that was not utterly laid waste, in which the inhabitants were more favorably disposed. A high-wrought desire for deliverance caused the smallest glimpses of hope to be looked upon as the consummation of all their desires; but the implacable animosity of fortune was not yet appeased. It slumbered only in order to regain strength.

Louis succeeded while at Zembin in obtaining a small sled, affording room for two persons, which was consigned to Bianca. Rasinski had a horse harnessed to it, transferring the rider to the office of driver. Bernard and Louis tried in vain to persuade Bianca, now that it was practicable, to gain a stage in advance, so as to reach Wilna, the longed-for haven of safety. She was not to be moved from her purpose, never for a moment to leave her brother or lover.

Anything like organization in the army was no longer to be thought of. Every one joined that division or detachment in which he expected to find most security, or which he fell in with accidentally. Rasinski again attached himself to Ney—partly from preference towards the marshal personally, partly because his military ambition prompted him always to seek the perils of battle, as being more meritorious.

During the progress of the first few days, the enemy pressed, but not very eagerly; swarms of Cossacks, which were dispersed by a single cannon-shot, were the only ones finally that molested the retreat.

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"You would murder a comrade to prolong

your own life?" said Bernard, in a tone of dignified determination; "be it so. But you will profit little by the deed. Your hour will overtake you the sooner!"

"Quick! death gripes me already!" cried the madman, his musket still levelled, and his bloodshot eyes wildly rolling.

Bernard stooped to put down the child, which impeded him in pulling off his coat; as he did so, he heard a loud cry, and turning, he beheld Bianca, who threw herself weeping at the feet of the furious soldier.

"Take this gold, these jewels!" she exclaimed; "this warm cloak is yours, but let my brother live!" And, with the quickness of thought, she tore the rich chain from her neck and the furs from her shoulders, leaving her arms and delicate frame exposed with slight covering to the rigor of that horrible climate. The soldier gazed at her for a moment with fixed and straining eyes, then his arms slowly sank; letting the musket fall to the ground, he pressed both hands to his face, and broke out in loud weeping and whimpering. By this time Louis came up, and he and Bernard lifted up Bianca, who was still kneeling on the frozen ground, and extending her arms with the proffered gifts.

"Wild beast that I am!" suddenly exclaimed the stranger; "no, I cannot survive this shame. Forgive me; you knew me once a better man, before suffering drove me mad! But no matter; I know my duty!"

He stooped to pick up his musket. Bernard kept his eyes fixed upon him, and racked his memory for the features, which, wild and distorted though they now were, still seemed familiar to him.

"Where have I known you?" he asked, as the man resumed his erect position.

"I don't wonder you've forgotten me," was the gloomy reply; "I have forgotten myself. Alive, I am no longer worthy of the Order!" cried he wildly, tearing from his rags the ribbon of the Legion of Honor and throwing it upon the snow. "I will try to earn it again, that you may lay it upon my body. I am my own judge, and I show no favor!"

Setting the butt of his musket firmly on the earth, he pressed his breast against the muzzle and touched the trigger with his foot. The piece went off, and its unfortunate owner fell heavily to the ground.

"Gracious God!" exclaimed Bianca, sinking senseless into Louis' arms.

Bernard was at the side of the fallen man, supporting his head. A last spark of life still remained. "If you get to France," gasped the suicide, "a word to my wife and children—Sergeant Ferrand—of Laon"—and the spirit departed.

As he closed his eyes, Bernard remembered him. It was the same Sergeant Ferrand whose humanity saved him and Louis from perishing during their imprisonment at Smolensko. Military honor was the condition of the veteran's existence; he thought himself degraded beyond redemption by the murderous aggression to which misery, pain, and despair had driven him: a woman had surpassed him in courage, and that was more than he could bear. A rigorous judge, he had pronounced his own doom, and executed it with his own hand!

Deeply moved, Bernard knelt beside the body; he gathered up the scrap of tarnished ribbon which the departed soldier had prized above all earthly goods, and laid it upon the breast of the corpse.

"Who shall deprive you of it?" he said. "May it adorn you beyond the grave, amidst the throng of the valiant who have preceded you!"

And they continued their journey, for the times admitted not of delay.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

THE sun's cold disk began to redden, and sink towards its snowy bed, when our fugitives perceived Malodeczno, about an hour's march before them. The hope of reaching a shelter re-invigorated the ebbing powers of body and mind. But as if fate were tantalizing them with some faint glimpse of hope, only for the purpose of bracing them against new and more formidable evils, suddenly the heights appeared covered with dark masses—the enemy having pushed on by other roads, presented himself to dispute the possession of the anticipated refuge. At first sight of the black columns lining the heights, the unarmed multitude crowded together like a flock of sheep, when the wolf breaks in upon them. Ney called loudly on those who bore arms to rally around him. A few remnants yet existed of a once well-trained army who had not yet lost sight of their honor. The ranks were formed; the few cavalry yet serviceable closed in, mixed up from every regiment; the artillery—as much of it as had been dragged along—took its position.

"Soldiers!" cried the marshal, "to-day we must fight for a shelter to cover our heads!—for the wintry night is more murderous than the weapons of the enemy. Necessity drives him also; if you stand bravely, you will destroy him. Think of your own preservation, the glory of France, and your Emperor!"

"Long live the Emperor!" was the cry which resounded.

"We have no horses," cried Rasinski, to his handful of followers; "let us serve at the guns, for men are wanted there."

A hollow reverberation boomed from the heights; the first balls were sent on their deadly errand; they struck the hard frozen ground, ricochetted, and in wild and whizzing parabolas flew over the heads of the soldiers drawn up for battle.

"You fire too high; we will make a better shot," said Rasinski, stooping down on the piece to take aim. "Now, fire!"

Jaromir fired off the gun.

"Do you see what a hole that ball makes?" Rasinski exclaimed, as the black line on the hill was broken, and the blue sky seen beyond. Had they only stood as many deep as they are in line, this shot would have cost them thirty heads at least!"

The battle now began. The enemy's artillery poured forth its thunders from three sides at once, and the balls struck among the crowds of harmless, unarmed fugitives, who in blind haste were rushing on towards the village of Malodeczno—as well as into the regular ranks of the brave fellows who were risking their lives for the safety of all.

"We must retreat slowly," said the marshal, "so that they cannot cut us off from the village."

The artillery gave one more salvo, by way of a farewell response, and then took up their position a few hundred paces farther back. The troops followed in close file.—Thus, without fighting of much consequence, they by degrees gained a position near the entrance to Malodeczno. But this short manœuvre had so severely taxed the strength of the artillery-horses, that every moment they were falling down over one another, and at last could not be made to rise. All hands were put to, so as to bring the field-pieces up on the rising ground, from which the access to the village could be defended.

"We can no longer save our guns, comrades!" cried the marshal, as he galloped along the line, "so we will at least sell them dearly!"

The Russians had slowly followed, keeping up their firing all the way; they now seemed to concentrate their strength, preparatory to making a general onset. But as soon as they showed themselves in full column, the French artillery saluted them with a discharge which scattered death among them by hundreds. The ground shook, the air cracked and seemed on fire; smoke and darkness drew an impenetrable veil over the troops. The enemy speedily

filled up the gaps made in his lines, and pressed resolutely onward, sustaining the attack by his artillery. A second discharge again checked his force; but still new masses were coming up behind; he had substitutes for his dead and fallen, for he fought with thousands against hundreds, and seemed determined to obtain possession of the village, cost what it would.

Rasinski, Boleslaus, Jaromir, Bernard and Louis served a gun together.

They had procured a place of safety for Bianca, where she could remain in their proximity, as well secured as circumstances permitted. Directly behind the spot on which the artillery had taken up their position, and in front of Malodeczno, the hill descended about a man's height almost perpendicularly, thus forming a natural breast-work. Here Bianca tarried with the child, while the battle was raging above. The ammunition-wagons were also drawn up in this place, from which the batteries of the hill were supplied with the implements of death.

Though Bianca had nothing to fear on her own account, yet her heart beat in anxious tumult, from knowing that but a few steps from her those she loved best on earth were exposed to all the horrors of death. However solemnly she had promised Bernard not to leave her safe retreat, she was unable to restrain her anxiety, as the thunder of the cannon increased to a hurricane. She must creep up the hill, to ascertain that her friends were yet spared from the cruel fate which rolled its iron stream of death over the fields in roaring billows. But her utmost scrutiny was fruitless, for the smoke lay in thick clouds over the batteries, and nothing could be distinguished, but black, unrecognisable figures moving about like shadows.

The noise of the conflict at length somewhat lessened, and suddenly it ceased altogether. Bianca rose eagerly; she must now try to join her friends. It was by this time decided whether a fatal blow had overtaken them or not. Quickly, with the child in her arms, she climbed up the acclivity. Out from the smoke and obscurity, a voice was then heard: "Sister! where art thou?" It was Bernard. Elated with joy, she exclaimed: "Here! here! You are alive, both, all!" and hastened towards her brother, who ran down to meet her. He flew towards her; she sank on his bosom; her joy was immeasurable. But he gently disengaged himself from her embrace.

"Do not rejoice too soon," he said with pain—"one more sacrifice! Boleslaus—"

"God of mercy and grace!" Bianca shrieked, turning pale, "is he gone?"

"We fear so; our friends are bringing him hither," answered her brother, pointing to some men slowly approaching.

With faltering steps he with his sister went to meet the comers, who carried the pale youth in their arms. A cannon-ball had shattered his thigh.

"Lay me down, I beg of you," he said faintly.

"Do as he wishes," Rasinski said in a low voice, shaking his head, as if to intimate that no care could save him.

They laid the wounded man carefully on the ground. Rasinski kneeled down by his head, and took him half-sitting gently into his arms. Jaromir seized the right hand of his expiring friend. Louis, too powerfully affected, turned away.

"You are all near me," the dying Pole said, with a friendly smile on his lips. "I die gloriously," he continued in a few moments, forcing himself more erect; "you must not grieve for me. I die an honorable death in the arms of my friends!" A noble pride suffused his pallid cheeks with a tinge, and his courageous spirit shone forth once more from his eyes. "I die contented, he added more plaintively. "Jaromir, my friend, my brother!"

Saying this, he pressed the hand of his kneeling comrade with fervor, for his thoughts reverted to the image of the loved object far away, which silently he had carried about with him in his heart. He then leaned his head upon Rasinski's fatherly breast, and expired.

"The Lord receive his soul!" Rasinski uttered with grave composure, laying his hands as if in benediction on the head of the deceased. He then turned to the friends and said: "We are happy in not being obliged to leave these remains in the wilderness. Night is coming on. We must endeavor to reach the shelter which has been so dearly purchased; and there he shall be buried!"

He pointed with his finger towards Malodeczno, on which the troops were now falling back, since the enemy, foiled by their indomitable courage, had finally relinquished their undertaking.

The cold increased more and more as the sun went down. The arms of the bearers, with their sad burthen, stiffened even in passing this short distance. Nothing short of the most hallowed and devoted friendship could have imposed upon them this last tribute of affection; had it been for any one else, it would have remained unperformed. But these faithful friends elicited fresh strength from their affection for the dead.

With much effort they reached a small house, which stood aside from the main road, along which the masses, in tumultuous crowds, were pouring into the village. They

unexpectedly found here an inhabited dwelling. An old man opened the door for the strangers, and approached them with supplicating gestures. Rasinski called out to him: "Is there room in thy cottage?"

"Oh, certainly," the old man replied, rejoiced to hear his own language spoken; "I shall be glad to take you into my house. All I beg of you is not to drive me out of it myself on this bitter winter's night. Grant me a place whereon to lay my grey head!"

"Dost thou think that we are monsters?" said Rasinski. "Thou hast nothing to fear."

"Then the Lord reward you," cried the old man: "but yesterday they drove out my son and my little grand-children, who perished before my closed door! Alas! I have their dead bodies in my cottage!"

"Great God!" cried Bianca, seized with a thrill of terror, "is it possible!"

"We also bring thee a dead body," said Rasinski; "his sacred remains are as dear to us as our own lives. Wilt thou swear to us by our Holy Mother Mary, to give him a Christian and decent burial? I promise to protect thee and thine house as long as we shall abide with thee."

"I swear it by the ever blessed Mother of God, that he shall rest by the side of my own children!" said the old man, at the same time lifting up his hands towards heaven to witness his oath.

They then entered the cottage.

"Bring your dead in here, gentlemen," said the old man, going before them with a light, and opening a side-door, which gave admittance to a small room.

"Oh, my God!" Bianca exclaimed, as she cast a look into the room. On a pallet of straw, covered with a white sheet, lay a dead man enveloped in a shroud; he was in the prime of life, but looked to have been sickly. Beside him lay two little girls, at the most seven or eight years of age.

Louis and Rasinski carried in the corpse of Boleslaus, and laid it down reverently by the side of the sleeping little ones.

"Do you see, dear sirs," said the old man, "yesterday, no longer than yesterday, the children were as fresh as two rosebuds—the father had been ailing ever since last spring—when his wife—no, pardon me for not speaking about that!—no, not that! Yesterday such a number of soldiers crowded in and took possession of my house, that they had no room—they drove us outside. It is true they were in a bad plight enough, but still they might have allowed us some nook to crouch in. We passed the night under the bare heavens; my son, already weakened by disease, could not endure the bitter cold; I could not keep the little ones from falling asleep—they expired in my arms. I alone

remained alive. I would gladly have laid down and died too—but I have yet another daughter—it is for her sake that I still live. But she is at present in Wilna."

While the old man was pouring forth the sorrows of his heart, the men had adjusted Boleslaus' garments and hair, and covered his remains with a large cloak, so as to keep the shattered limbs and clotted blood out of sight. When this had been done, he looked like a person slumbering—so calm, earnest, and noble were his features.

"Let him rest here," said Rasinski, sorrowfully; "his image is treasured within our hearts in lively, dignified, and cheerful characters. Let us preserve it so; it is not best to tarry too long."

Pursuant to this wish, all stepped back into the other apartment, where they were welcomed by a warm, life-restoring atmosphere.

A cheerful fire blazed on the hearth, and diffused warmth through all the inner space. The mariner who, after buffeting the storms of the vasty deep, enters the secure haven, is not so deeply penetrated with feelings of safety and of thankfulness as were these wayfarers, when this prospect of hospitality and repose sent a glow of fresh life through their veins..

A sudden knocking was heard at the door.

"Let me open the door," said Rasinski; "as long as there is room, we cannot be so inhuman as to leave our comrades a prey to this night!"

He went to the door, which was securely barricaded, and asked in French:

"Who is there without?—What do you want?"

Bernard at the same time came hastily out and said:

"They are some of our own men—I have recognised them."

Quickly the door was opened. Five half-frozen soldiers of Rasinski's regiment lay around it. In the confusion of the engagement they had lost their leader, and were now seeking for a shelter in the village. But every house was filled to overflowing. The place, in fact, had already been taken in possession by Victor's division, which on another account may be called a fortunate circumstance—as his troops had repulsed the Russians, who were pressing on from a westerly direction. Going from house to house, and everywhere denied admittance, the poor fellows, almost perishing from the cold, finally found an officer who gave them some clue where to find Rasinski, whom he had seen crossing the field with Jaromir and the rest, as they carried the body of Boleslaus. Following this direction, they had succeeded in finding the hut, which, as it often happens,

when everybody follows the stream, had remained entirely unnoticed.

Joy beamed from the eyes of the distressed men as they entered the warm room, and still more on seeing their commander and officers. The latter were equally happy to greet some of those whom they had believed lost.

A substantial repast soon refreshed the weary wanderers. The extreme tension of the physical powers now preponderated over even the deepest mental agony. Soon one and all laid themselves down, and were sunk in the profoundest slumber.

An outrageous rattling at the door, accompanied by savage yells, started Rasinski out of his sleep. He sprang quickly from his couch, and listened sharply, before answering the calls, in order to ascertain whether they were friends or foes. He soon found that they were Russians. He looked hastily at his watch; it was past six o'clock. It must, then, yet be quite dark out of doors. His companions slept soundly all around; the old man alone began to wake up, and demanded:

"Who's there?"

Rasinski sprang to his side, shook him until he was fully aroused, and whispered to him:

"Thou art a lost man, if thou betrayest us by a single word; let me manage the business!"

The frightened old man signified by gestures that he would obey.

Rasinski then left the room, stepped to the outer door, and called, in the Russian language:

"Who's there?"

"Russians, friend!" was the answer. "We are perishing. We have been marching all night. Open the door, quick; there are only a few of us."

"It is God's truth, gentlemen," answered Rasinski, "if I open to you, you are inevitably lost; the house is packed full of Frenchmen."

"The devil it is!" some one exclaimed outside. "How many are there of them?"

"Over fifty, sir, and a number of officers!"

"Then hold thy tongue, on thy life! In half-an-hour my men must be here. I will hasten to meet them. Every man which this house contains must fall into our hands. In half-an-hour we shall be back. Detain your guests at least that time!"

With these words the horsemen departed. Rasinski listened carefully, until the sound of the hoofs was lost in the distance. He then shook his companions, and roused them out of their sleep.

"What is the matter!" shouted Bernard, starting up.

"The enemy is at our heels!" answered

Rasinski. "We must away instantly into the village, and wake every one not already stirring. In half-an-hour the Cossacks will be upon us!"

These words operated like magic upon the drowsy group. Before three minutes had elapsed, all were ready to resume their wanderings. The landlord was obliged to produce all that he had of victuals and spirits, which was distributed and taken along.

On arriving at the first cottages of the village, they found the doors open, and the houses empty. The troops had already decamped.

"It seems we are the only ones that have staid behind, and the enemy is close upon our heels," said Rasinski to Bernard. "We must quicken our steps, so as to reach the woods yonder; there we will find sufficient shelter, even when day breaks."

The previous night's quiet rest had so invigorated the strength of the wanderers that they found themselves adequate to undergo fresh fatigues. The insufferable cold, however, seized upon those whose garments were not sufficiently thick with an unremitting power, especially when on the other side of the village they ascended an acclivity in the open field. They soon came upon the track of the army; for the foot often struck against dead bodies, which, frozen into stone, lay in the middle of the road.

Rasinski, who was well acquainted with the surrounding country, diverged from the main road, so as to reach Smorgoni by a nearer and safer path. At the same time, the forest screened them from the sight of the pursuing enemy. The cold urged them to the utmost speed, so that when the dark-red disc of the sun rose above the horizon, darting its earliest beams through the green firs, they had left the night's resting-place a considerable distance behind them.

Bianca endured the toil and hardship with heroic fortitude; not a sound of complaint, not a sigh escaped her, though her delicate frame, it would seem, must succumb. Even her looks did not betray anxiety or pain, and being constrained to refrain from speaking, she often turned her friendly glances on Bernard and Louis, as if she would say: "Never mind me; all will yet be well!"

Late at night the wanderers arrived in Smorgoni. The town was full of soldiers, but by a happy coincidence Rasinski found Marshal Ney, who procured a shelter for him and his followers, and immediately after sent for him personally.

In the space of an hour he returned.

Without uttering a word, he sat down, and leaned his head in his hand. Every one was silent; no one ventured to ask him the cause.

Thus passed another night, until the dawn awakened them to new dangers and troubles. When they were ready to depart, Rasinski stepped in among his friends, and said:

"Now I can tell you what it was that almost crushed me to the earth yesterday. *The Emperor has abandoned the army!*"

All looked upon him, petrified with astonishment.

"And he is in the right," continued Rasinski. "Yesterday I was as much shocked as you are now, because I know that nothing but an unshaken confidence in his mighty genius kept body and soul together in the existing fragments of the army. But it must needs be. We can save nothing but our own lives. The Emperor has greater problems to solve. Paris is now the stage of action for him. Here everything is lost; he was compelled to make haste, in order to save all there. We are left to shift for ourselves, and will be competent to do so."

They left their quarters, and resumed their march. The same tediousness, the same scenes and struggles were repeated as yesterday. The sun went down behind grey and heavy clouds; singly, slowly, and feebly a host of pale, shadowy figures, plodded through the snow. They seemed to be the inhabitants of another world, which the friendly smile of that luminary never greeted. Misery dwelt in their sunken and bloodshot eyes; the gripping-monster, *hunger*, grinned from their hollow cheeks and distorted lips; their teeth shook and chattered from the piercing cold, and their vague and wandering look betrayed the horrors of inept insanity. In this plight these frightful objects fell benumbed and unconscious one over the other, and where a rational being was yet found among them, he speedily supped full of horrors, until they blunted every nerve of his system.

Bianca had drawn her veil, and thus shut out the heart-rending picture from her sight. Bernard and Louis proceeded by her side, carrying the child by turns on their backs, wrapped up in a large comforter—for they were unable longer to support it in their stiffened arms. The little innocent creature alone smiled amidst these scenes of desolation. The cold rendered it so drowsy and feeble, that it mostly slept all the way, but without danger of freezing, as Bianca—with motherly care, enveloped it with thick, warm coverings.

So long as the daylight attended them their hopes were kept buoyant. But as soon as night spread its pall over the frozen earth, the last flickering spark of courage fled from the breast, and even the stoutest among them was bowed down by despondency.

The sun had disappeared, and the twilight

set in; the road descended into the unexplored dells and hollows of a dense and gloomy forest; no hope existed of finding a sheltering roof. The huge fir-trees rose like grim giants along the path, overspanning it with their long, blackened arms.

Large bodies of men came to a halt, and by order of their commanders set about establishing themselves in bivouac.

Bernard gave utterance to a similar wish; but Rasinski urged his friends to hold on their way a while longer. Accustomed to confide in their leader, all followed his advice. Suddenly Rasinski stopped.

"Now, my friends," he said, "here let us try to build a fire, and let us see if we cannot weather out this terrible night."

He ordered the people quickly to take possession of this spot, and was the first one to put hand to the work.

Bernard, who had gone armed ever since the attack made upon him by Sergeant Ferrand, drew his sword, and hastened to help felling some brush. Louis busied himself in removing the snow, so as to obtain a free space on which to encamp. Rasinski, assisted by Jaromir, who did everything unsolicited and in silence, tore the twigs and branches from the trees. The united efforts of these active hands in a few minutes accomplished their object. A bright flame shot up; the ground was strewed with fresh pine branches to form a couch, which was arranged close under a bank of earth, so as to shield them from the wind; they now turned their attention to prepare their carefully-hoarded provisions for a meal.

The blazing fire soon attracted straggling soldiers of different regiments; they all laid down in a compact half-circle, as near the fire as the heat permitted. It appeared as if they could never have enough of this life-inspiring warmth of which they had so long been deprived. But the accession became continually greater. Room was already wanting, and finally, if another companion was to be received, it had to be effected by some one already established exchanging his place for a less eligible one. But this was not the time or the place, when any one felt disposed with ready sympathy to sacrifice a part of his own ease and comfort. Necessity had become too imperious; the line between life and death was too imminent.

Rasinski watched the first hour, while his friends slept. Jaromir's turn came next. The young man arose, seized a long stick of fir and stirred the fire. Everything around was as still as the grave, not a foot stirred, not a sound was heard. Even Rasinski slept the moment he laid down.

Suddenly a loud laugh burst upon his ear,

quite near. He cowered down on hearing this unusual sound. From out of the surrounding darkness a grim figure stalked into the circle of fire-light. It was a gigantic cuirassier, wrapped in a tattered cloak, a bloody cloth bound round his head beneath his helmet. In his hand he carried a young fir-tree, as a staff to support his steps.

"Good evening," he said, in a hollow voice to Jaromir. "Good evening, comrade. You seem merry here!"

"What seek you?" demanded Jaromir, amazed at this hideous apparition. "There is no place for you here. Begone!"

The cuirassier stared at him with his hollow eyes, twisted his mouth into a frightful grin, and gnashed his teeth like some infuriated beast.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed, or rather yelled; "Sleep you then so sound, ye idlers!" And as he spoke he stamped his foot on a frozen corpse upon which he stood. "Awake, awake!" he cried, "and come with me!"

For a moment he stood as if listening to some distant sound, then tottered painfully forward to the fire.

"Back!" cried Jaromir, "Back, or I shoot you on the spot!" And he drew a pistol; but his hand, trembling with fever, had not strength to level it.

The lunatic stared at him with stupid indifference—his sunken features varying in their expression from a ghastly smile to the deepest misery. Jaromir gazed at him in silent horror. The huge figure stretched its lean arms out from under the cloak, and made strange and unintelligible gestures.

"Ho! I am frozen!" howled the human spectre at last, and shook himself. Then he clutched at the flames with his fingers, like an infant, and staggered nearer and nearer till he stood close to the circle of sleepers, far within which he extended his arms. For the first time he now seemed to feel the warmth of the fire. A low, whining noise escaped him; then he suddenly exclaimed, in tones between laughing and crying, "To bed! to my warm bed!" tossed his fir-tree staff far from him, stumbled forwards over the sleeping soldiers, and threw himself, in his raging madness, into the midst of the glowing pile.

"Help! help!" cried Jaromir—his hair erect with horror, and seizing Rasinski, he shook him with all his remaining strength.

"What is it?" cried Rasinski, raising himself.

"There, there!" stammered his friend, pointing to the flames, in which the unhappy cuirassier lay writhing and bellowing with agony. Rather conjecturing than comprehending what had occurred, Rasinski started

up to rescue the sufferer. But it was too late. The heat had already stifled him; he lay motionless, the flame licking greedily round his limbs, and a thick nauseous smoke ascending in clouds from his funeral fagots. Rasinski stepped shudderingly backward, and turned away his face to conceal his emotion; then he observed that all around him lay buried in a deathlike sleep. Not one had been aroused by the terrible catastrophe that had occurred in the midst of so many living men.

There was one stirring, however; it was Bianca. In her sleep the piercing outcries of the consuming wretch had reached her ear. Apprehending something fearful, she made an effort to free herself from the heavy fetters of sleep, and raised herself in a sitting posture, looking anxiously around. Her eye fell upon Jaromir, who stood pale, trembling and bewildered, looking into the fire. Her sympathising heart yearned in pity towards the unhappy youth, for she believed that alienation of mind, with the symptoms of which he had the last few days been visited, had now obtained full sway over him.

"Dear Jaromir!" she said, addressing him in accents of solicitude.

He looked about him with a strange expression, and appeared as if awakening from a dream. "Ah!" he sighed, while a singular melancholy played on his lips.

"It is nothing! Bianca," said Rasinski, hastily; for he wished to prevent her knowing anything of what had occurred. "Only lie down and go to sleep; we will take good care to watch over thee!"

"Ah, Lodoiska!" hast thou at last forgiven me?" suddenly murmured Jaromir, his voice changing into a violent fit of weeping, pressing his head on Bianca's hand, and deluging it with a flood of tears.

"Holy Father, what is that?" she exclaimed, trembling, but not daring to withdraw her hand.

"Recollect thyself, Jaromir!" said Rasinski seriously, trying to raise him up. "Remember where thou art!"

"Ah, Rasinski, she forgives me!" cried the young man, and sank on the breast of his friend; "she is a saint, she is angry no longer! She has forgiven me, for the sake of the dying Boleslaus! Is it not so? Oh, do not revoke it! Come once more to my bosom!"

He folded his hands, looking at Bianca beseechingly; a large tear rolled down his pale cheek, but still a faint, rosy tinge, overspread his countenance.

"I am not Lodoiska," answered Bianca, vainly endeavoring to disengage her hand.

"Thou art not!" he ejaculated, with a bewildered look. "Thou wilt not be—thou

hatest me—thou despisest me! Alas, now everything is lost!"

In despair he threw himself again on Rasinski's breast, and attempted to twine his arms around his neck, but his strength failed him, and he fell back insensible.

"This, too, must be endured!" murmured Rasinski, stooping over the pale and prostrate man.

Bianca, in her excitement, wanted to call Bernard and Louis, but Rasinski prevented her, saying:

"What help can they offer?—Why should we lay this burden upon others unnecessarily?—It will perhaps soon be over!"

Rasinski rubbed the youth's temples with snow, who at last opened his eyes, and looked vaguely and bewildered around.

"Why do you take me out of the grave?" he asked in a hollow voice; "it was so quiet and cool there below! Ah! I see, the sun rises gloriously, and shines into the tomb! How beautiful she is!"

He gazed fixedly into the fire. All at once he tore himself with resistless strength from Rasinski's arms, sprang up, and cried:

"That is the burning pit of hell!—the black spirits push me on!—quick!—quick!"—and with a frightful effort he tried to spring forward into the flames. Rasinski grasped him, and held him with the energy of despair—Bianca threw herself at his feet and clung to his knees.

"Help!—help! Brother, Louis!" she cried.

Waked out of his sound sleep by this loud cry, Louis sprang up.

"What has happened?" he cried, as he saw Jaromir struggling in the hands of Rasinski and Bianca. Bernard also jumped up. It was indeed high time, for Rasinski, with all his strength, was unable any longer to restrain the hapless man from rushing into the flames.

"Help, friends!" he cried, "help me to overcome him, or he perishes!"

Bernard and Louis hastened to Rasinski's assistance. On seeing the distorted features of Jaromir, they suspected what had happened.

"Oh! I have long feared it would come to this!" sighed Bernard from the bottom of his soul; "he had too much pressing on his mind; he could not sustain it."

To this unnatural taxing of the faculties, succeeded rapid reaction. The arms sank powerless—the knees gave way under the unhappy man. He burst into a flood of heart-rending lamentations. These sounds finally waked up the sleepers. They sat up, looked first astonished, and then displeased at the uproar; an angry murmur arose, which increased every minute. They began to point

at the unfortunate youth, and some vague apprehension that he would bring misfortune upon them took possession of their minds.

"Who is the madman, and what ails him?" savagely exclaimed a bearded grenadier. "He robs us of our precious sleep! Thrust him from the fire—let him freeze if he cannot be still!"

"Aye, thrust him out!" was the universal cry; and several sprang to accomplish the barbarous deed. Bianca uttered a cry of terror; Louis caught her in his right arm, and with the left kept off the assailants. Rasinski, who at once saw the greatness of the peril, left Jaromir in Bernard's care, and leaped with flashing eyes into the midst of the circle. Ever prompt and decided, he snatched a half-consumed branch from the fire, waved it above his head, and shouted with that lion's voice so often heard above the thunder of the battle:

"Back, knaves! The first step forward costs one of you his life!"

The angry soldiers hesitated and hung back, yielding to Rasinski's moral ascendancy as much as to his threat of punishment. But then the grenadier drew his sabre, and furiously exclaimed:—

"What, dastards! are ye all afraid of one man? Forward! Down with the Polish dogs!"

"Down thyself, inhuman ruffian!" thundered Rasinski, and sprang to meet his foe. Adroitly seizing the soldier by the wrist of his uplifted arm, so that he could not use his weapon, he struck him over the head with the burning branch so violently, that the charred wood shivered, and a cloud of sparks flew out. But the blow, heavy as it was, was deadened by the thick bearskin cap, and served only to convert the angry determination of the grenadier into foaming fury. Of herculean build, and at least half the head taller than his opponent, he let his sabre fall, and grappled Rasinski, with the intention of throwing him into the flames. The struggle lasted but for a moment, before Rasinski tottered and fell upon his knees. To all appearance his doom was sealed; the hero succumbed before the overpowering strength of the brute, when Louis flew to his assistance, dragged the soldier backwards, and fell with him to the ground. Rasinski picked up the sabre, with his left hand dashed the bearskin from the head of the fallen grenadier, and with the right dealt him a blow that clove his skull in twain. Then, erecting his princely form, he advanced, with the calm dignity that characterised him, into the midst of the astounding bystanders.

"Throw the corpse into the snow!" commanded he: "lie down again and sleep. It matters no more than if I knocked a wolf upon the head!"

As if he had no longer occasion for it, he threw the sabre contemptuously from him. None dared to murmur, but two soldiers obediently raised the bloody corpse of the fallen man, carried it a few paces, and threw it upon the snow-covered ground.

Rasinski, still chafing and vexed like the ocean after a tempest, walked back and forth a few minutes without noticing even his friends. He then suddenly became mild, and said, turning his gaze on the delirious Jaromir:

"Let us take him between us, Bernard. What can be done in this case, but to commend him to the mercy of Heaven? Sleep may perhaps regulate his disordered brain."

He laid down a second time, took Jaromir kindly into his arms, and pressed him close to his breast.

Bernard and Louis kept watch together, and divided between them the tending of the fire. The night-wind rose sharp and piercing; it ruffled their cheeks with its icy touch, and shook the towering fires, dislodging the snow that weighed down the branches.

As they sat silently side by side, a low voice near them was heard, as if singing. It proceeded from Jaromir, who lay awake, his eyes wide open, smiling strangely, and singing to himself half-aloud.

"He is dreaming of her!" said Louis; "that is the melody of the song which Lodoiska sang for us that evening in Warsaw. I have often heard him humming the same tune. His soul is then far away!"

The two friends gazed upon the poor fellow with troubled looks. The deranged youth kept singing low to himself, at the same time looking up in indecribable anguish. In a few minutes the melody died away on his lips, and he relapsed into his former state of insensibility.

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

RASINSKI roused every one to prepare for marching; the thick mist of morning had settled down and shrouded the forest in its grey mantle. But it was not a humid floating mist which stole its way among the bushes and underwood, but a driving, sleety ice-dust, which darkened the atmosphere. On inhaling it into the lungs it struck like a pungent poison.

"Get up, get up, sleepers!" cried Rasinski; "to-day you may reach the end of all your hardships and toil!"

But only the smallest number heeded his call. A few stirred—sat up and groaned—and then tumbled back to breathe out the last

vestige of life; the greater part already lay locked in the rigid embrace of death; a parterre of dead bodies surrounded the expiring fire. Jaromir sat upright. He looked like a ghost, but he was yet living. Louis and Bernard were aware that this day they were to put forth their last energies. Bianca, strangely enough, seemed to be the least affected by exhaustion; as though the weaker frame assimilated itself to the feminine spirit, and in harmony with the latter, evinced more fortitude under suffering than that of the sterner sex.

With feelings lacerated by horror, they were obliged to pick their way over the bodies of the frozen; the ground far and wide was strewed with these objects. Jaromir seemed insensible to everything; he walked by the side of Rasinski, and followed his every gesture with mechanical obedience.

The dark and wide woods lay hushed in silence; for those who were encamped around the waning watch-fires were either still fast asleep, or already beyond its necessity. They passed by enormous fir-trees, from which depended dark and ponderous branches. Here were seen frozen figures in every species of attitude, as if death had on a sudden arrested the current of life, and transformed them into images of stone. Some still held in their convulsive grasp the hatchet, with which they had made fruitless attempts to fell the gigantic timber. Others, equally unavailably, had laid fire around their trunks, trying to ignite them; they were observed kneeling down, the face projecting close to the gnarled and knotted roots, and the yet half-kindled pitch-pine in the hand. Arrayed in the winding-sheet of the icy mist surrounding them, these objects resembled the figures of a camera optica seen through a magnifying glass, uncouth, and lodging like huge petrified spectres in the sepulchral stillness of nature's death-chamber.

Rasinski accelerated his steps to escape from the sickening sight. But the road in its entire length was replete with these objects of horror, and the foot at every step came in contact with some terrifying obstruction. At last, after an hour's march, the forest was passed, and as the mist settled down to the surface, a house was seen which, perhaps, would offer them shelter and warmth. With redoubled speed the wanderers hastened towards it. But as they drew near and saw the gaping windows despoiled of their frames, and the traces of fire on the ground, they were soon convinced it was no longer an abiding-place for human beings. However, Rasinski stepped up and opened the door of the building, which looked like a barn or stable. He started back with a shudder, for he saw nothing within but dead bodies—a

ghastly throng, with the eyes staring open.

"Is there one human creature alive here?" he called in a loud voice. Everything remained silent; the sound of his voice only resounding hoarsely throughout. "Does any one still live?" he repeated more loudly, for his heart resisted the dreadful idea that through all this promiscuous throng there should not survive *one* glimmering spark. But so it was; for when he drew his pistol and fired over the heads of the prostrate sleepers, nothing stirred, all remained still as the grave.

The road became more and more thronged by stragglers flocking from the adjoining woods, or the deserted villages in the vicinity. Our friends soon found themselves again in the midst of a dense crowd of those ghost-like, and hollow-eyed wretches, who, urged by the severity of the weather, had put on everything as a covering they fell in with. But amid all this accumulation of misery nothing inflicted acuter pain on these hearts so closely knit together by ties of blood and friendship, than the deplorable condition of Jaromir, who, in complete alienation of mind, walked on insensible to the privations which all shared alike, but incessantly broke out in paroxysms, now of the deepest sorrow, bursting into loud weeping, now into maudlin laugh and merriment, and then again into ungovernable rage and desperation. In these last he knew no one, and pushed Rasinski away from him in blind fury; the friends were obliged to gather around him and keep him by main strength from laying violent hands on himself. This they did repeatedly, but even their united strength was not sufficient to restrain him, and they looked with horror for the moment, when a dread catastrophe would happen.

This was their last trial of the kind! The hour of deliverance had struck at last. A cry of joyful surprise suddenly broke from the foremost files of the troops, which momentarily rose louder and louder. Everybody asked and questioned about the cause, and the masses hastened forward with increasing eagerness. Rasinski and his friends also reached the angle of the road from whence the cry had first been heard; and there lay before them Wilna, the long-wished for haven of rest—the first inhabited town in their route. The friends embraced each other—burning tears flowed from their eyes, for the sanctuary was at last before them, after so many sufferings and sacrifices.

Jaromir gazed with indifference on the tears of thankfulness so copiously shed by his friends. Only for a moment did a faint dawning of reason arise. With a sigh he let his head relapse into its oblique position; and his kindling eye was again fixed in the wild stare of idiocy.

"Lead me on farther, Lodoiska," he said, beseechingly, to Bianca.

The latter offered her arm, and they walked on.

But the goal, though so near, was yet difficult to attain. The road was already crowded far and wide with a mob of unhappy fugitives, roused from their stolid apathy by the sight of the longed-for asylum. In blind precipitation—the curse attendant on this retreat throughout—they rushed on towards the town. Already a heaping and crowding became observable, notwithstanding that the open fields afforded room in plenty for disseminating the masses. What would be presented, then, when the stream would become obstructed, by reason of narrow streets and avenues? Rasinski contemplated the result with deepest anxiety. He apprehended a repetition of the horrors of the Berezina—horrors enhanced by the mad infatuation of his own comrades. Now, as then, the entire crowd pressed on in one and the same direction. Driven by a senseless animal instinct, each followed his predecessor without judgment or reflection.

Rasinski looked around to discover some by-path which they might turn aside into unperceived; for he feared to draw too large a number after him, if, with his little party he was suddenly to strike off into the fields. They had already come up to a few houses that lay scattered outside the town, and were close by the suburbs. Here his plan might be carried into execution.

"Keep yourselves close, my friends," he said, "and follow me quickly when I turn out of the road. Behind that fence we shall be able to reach another of the town gates, where the crowd will not be so pressing."

Jaromir, now calm, he took by the arm, and let Bianca walk between Bernard and Louis. The living stream began already to stagnate, and they were pushed forward with rude violence, rather than of their own accord. It was high time to adopt the proposed plan.

"Now!" cried Rasinski, turning to one side from the road. Bernard and Louis, with Bianca, followed.

Moved by some dim conjecture, numbers pressed after. The deviating path passed across a steep and slippery slope. Rasinski shot across safely to the hollow beyond, but Bianca slipped. Bernard and Louis both supported her, but they were also too weak and unsteady to keep firmly on their feet, especially as Bernard had the child in his arms; so they all fell down together. The crowd passed by them on each side. It did not trample them down, but it cut them off from their guide. With difficulty they succeeded in gathering themselves up. Bianca was

found to have sprained her foot. Bernard looked about for Rasinski. He had disappeared, while a huge mob already covered the field.

To contend against this current was out of the question;—to escape from it by advancing more rapidly seemed equally hopeless. There remained, therefore, nothing for the friends to do but suffer themselves to be swept along by the turbulent billows. The path turned and meandered around the angular zig-zag enclosures of several detached farms. Suddenly it branched off in a variety of directions, every lane being already crowded with people. Which one had Rasinski followed? It was beyond conjecture to know; and even had it been possible to ascertain, it would have availed nothing: for neither was it here left optional which path to take, but every one was obliged to go in the direction in which the ever-increasing throng bore him on. Bernard, acting upon the same principle which stood him in such good stead at the Berezina, made it his chief object to elbow his way out of the crowd, so as to recover the chance of choosing his own way. In this he succeeded before coming to the first houses in the suburb, where the multitude crowded into the narrow streets like a flock of sheep pursued by the wolf.

Breathless and exhausted, they finally gained the open field. The cold, which had so long and ruthlessly persecuted them, now became their friend and ally; for the ditches, water-courses, and swampy places, which they otherwise could not have crossed in their way to the town, were all converted into solid ice. Their circuitous course prolonged the distance by a good half-hour's walk—a severe ordeal in their feeble condition; but, finally, they came to the opposite suburb, where they found themselves alone, as though no army lay in the vicinity. The few miserable dwellings, however, afforded them no relief, for they had all been abandoned by the inmates. But the open town-gate was only a few hundred steps before them, and with unspeakable joy they descried some well-dressed persons in the street. Trembling with excitement, they entered the gate. Even their great anxiety about Rasinski subsided considerably as, in viewing the inhabited houses, the people busily engaged in their various pursuits, they naturally concluded that he also had found a comfortable shelter. After a few hours' repose in a warm room, they would, no doubt, soon be enabled to find out their friend, and then their meeting would be doubly a happy one.

The nearest roof was to them the one most welcome. Pressing need exalted every hut into a palace; they therefore hastened with faltering steps towards a small but friendly

looking dwelling, where they saw a young woman standing at the door, staring like others at the strange appearance of the three pilgrims.

Bianca being the only one of the party who spoke the language of the country, called out to this girl in Russian :

"Can you let us have lodgings, my good young woman ? We will reward you liberally."

The young woman suddenly stood as if transfixed. She then exclaimed :

"In the name of all the saints, Countess Feodorowna, what brings you here?"—rushed towards her, seized her hands, and covered them with kisses. "What under heaven brings you hither, and in this plight ? Most merciful God ! do you know me no longer ?"

"Axinia, is it thee !" cried Feodorowna, in a faltering voice. "Axinia, thou art our preserver!"

At this moment her strength and her senses forsook her at once. She became giddy and staggered, but Louis and Bernard received her in their arms. Axinia seized the child and hastened before them, crying out : "Follow me!—Come in, come in!"

CHAPTER XC.

Axinia assisted her beloved mistress to bed without delay. She brought whatever her little house afforded to minister to her wants. In a few minutes Bianca recovered, opened her eyes, and with perfect self-possession looked around her.

Axinia entered and approached, with an expression of the greatest happiness in her features. Bianca now made inquiries touching her own fortunes, and what had kept her still on the Russian soil, which she had been determined to quit forever. With a slight blush the young wife related that a premature confinement had overtaken her, and laid her on a long and tedious bed of sickness. This nearly consumed their little store of travelling-money; and as, in the meantime, a situation was offered to Paul, as superintendent of an hospital, he accepted it so much the more readily, as while the war continued his prospects of earning his bread in Germany were very doubtful. Such was their position at the present time.

While the friendly hostess was recounting her little history, a strange noise and uproar arose in the street. People flocked in clusters; others ran in hot haste up the streets towards the centre of the town; the windows were thrown open in every house, the peo-

ple looking out full of curiosity. Axinia did the same.

"Holy Mother of God ! what can be the matter ?" she cried out in great fright. "Ah ! there comes Paul; he will tell us what it is!"

She hastened out to meet her husband, who, being informed by her what had taken place in his domicile, entered the room bounding with joy.

"Most gracious Countess !" he exclaimed, "shall I dare to believe my eyes ? And you have come with that multitude of unhappy wretches, who, wild and howling, block up the streets ?"

"We have come with the army," answered Bianca; "it is but too true!"

"With the army !" reiterated Paul in astonishment. "This—the army ? Never—it cannot be !"

It was now first discovered that the inhabitants of Wilna had as yet not had the least intimation of the dreadful disasters through which the power of the *Conqueror* had been shattered, so concealed had the Emperor contrived to keep his misfortunes. Axinia and her husband with terror and amazement now for the first time received the intelligence, and listened to the portrayal of the most inconceivable misery that ever visited the heads of a doomed host.

Axinia turned pale and trembled when she learned that her mistress had shared in all these sufferings and privations. She threw herself on her trembling knees before a small Madonna, and, amid streaming tears, offered up her thanks to the hallowed image for the preservation of Feodorowna. Her care and affectionate assiduities were redoubled towards her and her yet unknown companions. Her grateful heart found such light in that she was at least able to manifest; how gladly she cancelled the sacred obligations which Bianca's noble generosity had imposed upon her.

The tumult in the streets waxed greater. Single individuals of the unfortunate fugitives were seen trying to find shelter and food even in these distant back-streets.. The first comers were received; but when more arrived, even whole squads, the inhabitants closed their doors in alarm.

The repulsed ones, left to perish in the very face of relief, raised a terrible cry of despair and rage. They shook the doors with all their strength, and threatened to set fire to the houses.

Paul was irresolute what was best to be done. His humane disposition prompted him to take the unhappy creatures into his house, while prudence dictated a contrary step. Bianca spoke with determination.

"Receive all," she said, "that your house can hold. We have shared their wretched-

ness, and know that compassion is not to be withheld."

Paul was about to go down, but it was no longer necessary. Only a small number had strayed as far as to this corner of the town; the rest were already on their way back, to try their fortunes in the town itself. He hastened back to his guests and imparted the news.

Bernard inquired:

"But, how is it possible that now these men come pouring into the town, that no one takes care of them—no preparation is made to receive them? We should have been here half-an-hour sooner, had we not come a round-about way to this gate, in order to get out of the crowd."

"That is the true cause of the mischief," answered Paul. "The mob is so jammed in the narrow suburb, that no one can move backward or forward. The gate is blocked up with wagons, horses, and men. Only here and there is one able to force his way through. But who could have supposed this the army? We thought they were a host of marauders, who, in a retreat, always flock before the regular troops. Orders were consequently sent to the magazines not to make any distribution; and we dare not take them into any of the hospitals."

"Merciful God!" Louis exclaimed, "then these poor outcasts will perish through the blind and selfish scruples of their own friends! Run, run, my brave friend, back into the town;—tell them that it is the whole army which comes to them in this pitiable condition;—urge upon them that one hour's delay must cost thousands their lives!"

Paul hastened away.

The three friends, having themselves found relief, now began to feel great anxiety about Rasinski and Jaromir. They believed until now that themselves were among the last who had found a shelter; but it now appeared that they were indeed among the most favored. Bianca gave utterance to her fears, but she moderated her expressions, fearing that Louis and Bernard, impelled by their generous sympathies, would, notwithstanding their own exhaustion, renounce the nursing care they so much needed, and sally forth in attempting to find Rasinski. She was right in her conjectures; for, as if pre-concerted between them, both suddenly exclaimed:

"We must go seek him!"

They departed, promising to return in an hour.

The great square presented a distressing spectacle. The hapless fugitives were gathered around the magazines and the hospitals, crowding the doors, which by strict orders were kept closed against them. Howling, cursing, and beseeching were heard fearfully

mingling. The inhabitants hid themselves in their houses, and bolted their doors. For, truly, the strangers who had come among them, blackened by smoke and mud, with the hollow, agonised looks of hunger and terror, resembled a host of frightful harpies, that threatened to fall upon everything in the likeness of food or drink, or betrayed any affinity to an easy and comfortable state. Wherever a door opened to any of them, there was speedily found reason to repent of it; for there was no notwithstanding others who poured in, and, goaded by hunger, cared nothing for gratitude or forbearance. The blighting curse which followed this army wherever it trod the earth, held its sway even here. Safety was at hand, the terminus of misery was reached—but fate, with relentless mockery, lurked in this very spot with treacherous malice. It dashed the cup of relief from the wretched victim's quivering lip when on the point of quaffing the restoring cordial, and left him to languish and expire.

Louis and Bernard rambled in vain through this Bedlam, where no one cared a straw for his neighbor, but each one for himself sought in blind desperation to extort relief.

It was in vain that they shouted the names of Jaromir and Rasinski through the streets—not a trace of them could they discover.

Thus were they to become the target of Fortune's most venomous arrows, in losing their noblest friend, who had been their shield and preserver in a thousand dangers. At last, giving up all hope, they turned their steps back to their dwelling—their own strength beginning to fail them. They had to pick their way through long lanes of stiffened corpses, lying before the houses, at the doors of which they had fruitlessly knocked. The severity of the weather was still on the increase.

The friends drew near to Axinia's house, with hearts oppressed with grief and regret. Neither of them spoke; neither imparted his fears to the other, nor did either dare to ask the other any question. They were already quite near the hospitable threshold, when they observed a covered travelling sleigh with post-horses, coming in at the town-gate. Much surprised at a sight which had not met their eyes for months, they looked at it with fixed attention.

All on a sudden Bernard cried:

"It is Mary!"

He seized Louis rudely by the arm, and leaning forward, trembling with excitement, pointed across to a female figure, who, with veil thrown aside, looked out of the open carriage-window. Louis had scarcely fixed his eyes upon her before he recognised the well-beloved lineaments, and with a cry of: "Sister! sister!" endeavored, with faltering

steps, to hasten to her side. It was impossible—his strength deserted him. Bernard, too, stood as if entranced, his arms thrown around his friend, hardly knowing whether he supported him or himself.

"Sister!—Mary!" they cried again, and now first she heard them. She gave a loud scream; the carriage-door flew open; and before the horses could be stopped, she sprang out, fell down on her knees, again rose to her feet, and, breathless and bewildered, threw herself into the arms of her brother.

Speechless, the two held each other firmly embraced, neither of them able to comprehend their true state. A mist gathered before Bernard's eyes—tears obscured his vision; he turned and wept, agitated by the most poignant feelings.

Mary suddenly stepped before him. He looked up; glad tears filled her eyes; her countenance was radiant with a purified sorrow; the lips whispered almost inaudibly, while the agitation of her bosom nearly choked her voice:

"Bernard, my dear friend!" she faltered.

He seized her proffered hand;—the moment was overpowering.

The countess, on Mary's leaving her so suddenly, called for the carriage to stop, and, with Lodoiska, followed after her.

"Oh, my friends!" said the countess, giving a hand to each in saluting them. "Tell me quickly," she continued, "what do you know about my brother—about Jaromir?"

"They entered the town with us," quickly rejoined Bernard. "We unfortunately became separated in the crowd. But come with us, ladies; we have found lodgings, and there is room even for you. The town is inundated with soldiers. You would find it a difficult matter to obtain accommodation."

The countess freely assented to Bernard's proposal; yet she threw an anxious look on the young men, whose countenances bore no expression of joy. The eyes of Lodoiska dwelt with painful suspense on Bernard while he spoke. A surmise of the truth seemed to agitate her frame; for, on hearing the name of Jaromir mentioned, she turned as pale as the snow under her feet.

Bernard led the way towards the house. As they arrived, Axinia looked astonished, and cast a glance at Bernard, as much as to say—Where do these come from?—where shall I find room?

"Is the Princess asleep?" asked Bernard.

"She is so exhausted that she lies as if in a trance," answered Axinia. "I cannot call it sleep; she constantly starts, and calls out, 'Jaromir!' 'Rasinski!'"

Bernard's lips quivered upon hearing a reply that betrayed almost everything.

"What does it mean?" cried the countess.

"I adjure you, do not conceal from me the truth respecting my brother and Jaromir. Our hearts have been long prepared for the intelligence of their death—we shall know how to bear what is inevitable! This suspense of torturing apprehension lacerates my bosom. How then can Lodoiska endure it?"

It was fortunate that the latter was not near enough to catch these few words.

Bernard answered in a whisper: "I cannot relieve you of this anxiety; but still my hopes preponderate over my fears."

Axinia ushered the new comers into a chamber separate from that in which Bianca reposed.

With what blended feelings of joy, of happiness, and of terror and wonderment, did these ladies now listen to a rapid sketch of the trials and dangers which the men had gone through in this terrible campaign! Both hesitated to speak of Boleslaus; but finally Louis took upon himself to say:

"One of our dearest friends has been torn from our arms! Boleslaus is no more! He died the death of a hero!—he closed his life defending his flag!"

Mary wept gently in the arms of her brother, hiding her sweet face in his bosom. Bernard sat dejected, his head leaning on his hand, looking fixedly on the ground. Lodoiska heard the intelligence with a heaving bosom and blanched lips; tears rolled down her cheeks. Was it some dim foreboding which occupied her mind, or was it grief for the noble youth who had loved her secretly, but so faithfully—and on whom she had bestowed, at least, friendly wishes for his welfare? The countess rose, and walked back and forth in the apartment, as was her wont under excitement.

"Have you told me *all* concerning Rasinski and Jaromir?" she demanded with earnestness.

Louis paused in giving an answer, for they had yet said nothing of Jaromir's being deranged; but Bernard was more resolute.

"Everything," he said quickly, "which can be comprised in the few touches by which we have endeavored to represent a picture of so melancholy a scene."

The countess stood like the statue of Minerva, majestically erect. Her dark eye seemed to pierce the hopeless future; exalted sorrow dwelt upon her lips—a sublime severity on her brow; long she stood silent and motionless. Then a gentle smile lit up her noble countenance, like a beam from the sun which flits across the autumnal landscape.

"I have yet a daughter!" she exclaimed, opening her arms to the pale and trembling Lodoiska, who, sinking, threw herself on her bosom.

CHAPTER XCI.

PAUL had now returned home. His account of the state of affairs in the town afforded but little satisfaction to the friends. Night moreover was setting in; they were therefore constrained to await the rising of another sun.

The ladies stayed with Bianca in her chamber, into which Louis had ushered them. What happy moments, sweetened by love, friendship, and the sacred throbings of gratitude, might they not all have enjoyed, had not missing friends still left a void in all hearts!

With a view to extend at least some alleviation to the uneasy women, so that they might pass the night under less anxious apprehensions, Bernard persuaded the kind and obliging Paul to represent the state of things in the town in the most favorable light, and to this end conducted him into Bianca's room. Paul then informed the countess that it was only in the first confusion and alarm that the worst symptoms had appeared, but that now everything began to assume the appearance of order and quiet; that the soldiers were received into the houses of the citizens, where they were now enjoying repose; and that to-morrow morning they would awake greatly strengthened and refreshed. To-day it would be impossible to find out any person who might be searched for, because every one who obtained a shelter imminently sought rest. The countess listened to this communication in silence; she resigned herself, but no cheering ray of hope visited her breast.

The demands of physical nature now became pressing upon the weary wayfarers Bernard, Louis, and Bianca shortly lay in profound sleep; but the countess and Lodoiska were yet wakeful with anxious thoughts. Mary participated in their sorrows—not merely from the liveliest sympathy of friendship, but also because her heart, however strenuously she had wrestled to control and subdue it, still beat for Rasinski with a silent, deep and hallowed affection.

Paul and Axinia remained on the watch, from the sincere interest which they cherished for their guests, though they had modestly retired, and left them to themselves.

"Hark! Axinia," Paul said, suddenly to her, starting to his feet, "was not that a noise of some one groaning? There, again!"

He opened the window, and leaned out to listen.

"The noise comes from that narrow street across the way, where the Jews live! I think, too, that I hear their grating voices."

They both listened with anxious attention. In a few minutes they heard a dull sound, as

of some heavy body falling, and at the same time a loud scream of distress.

"What is that?" cried Paul; "what can be going on there? Should the sanguinary villains have—"

A man called out for help, groaning piteously. Axinia began wringing her hands in affright. Suddenly the door was thrown open, and the countess entered, carrying a light in her hand.

"What is the meaning of that dreadful noise?" she demanded, apprehensively. "It sounds hideously, and resembles the calls of distress. Go, my friend, and see what it is!"

Paul threw his fur cloak around him, and seized a lantern. But Axinia held him back in alarm.

"Who knows," she uttered, "what shocking deed has been committed?—and whether the monster would hesitate to murder you too! Do not go alone, Paul!"

"I must!" cried Paul; "humanity demands it!"

"Let me at least call the gentlemen."

"No; let them have their sleep—they are tired; and perhaps we might get there too late!"

"No! no! they are already dressed, and are lying down in their cloaks," Axinia replied again, quickly, hastening into the next room, where Bernard and Louis lay fast asleep on a truss of straw—the house being short of beds. Their military habits being yet in full force with them, they sprang up at the very first summons.

"We will go with you!" cried Bernard, upon hearing the first dozen words. Louis seized the pistols, and buckled on his sabre.

Paul, bearing a lantern, preceded them to the spot whence the piteous sounds proceeded. It was a narrow lane, running parallel to the city wall, and inhabited entirely by Jews. Just as they turned into it they were challenged by a manly and well-known voice in the rear: "Who goes there?—What is this disturbance?"

"Rasinski!" exclaimed Louis. Paul turned, and, as the light fell upon the face of the new comer, the features of the noble Pole were revealed to his friends.

"Rasinski! you here!—and alive!" cried Louis, throwing himself into the count's arms."

In the tumult of their feelings, they would have mutually imparted their adventures since their separation, had not the doleful cries been again heard. Rasinski disengaged himself from Bernard's arms. "These cries," he said, "have aroused me out of my sleep. Let us first attend to those in distress."

Paul again walked before with the lantern. The lane was narrow and crooked, so that they could not see far before them. On pass-

ing an abrupt bend, they distinguished several figures, which fled noiselessly before them, like night-birds frightened by the sudden light, keeping close in the shadow of the wall.

"Who goes there?" cried Rasinski, in Russian. "Stand, or I fire!"

But the shadows flew onwards, grazing the wall, and gliding over the snow. Rasinski rushed after them, stumbled over an object in his path, fell, and, in his fall, his pistol went off. Louis and Bernard, close at his heels, would have stopped to help him up—

"Forward, forward!" he cried; "follow and catch them!"

They hurried on, but only one figure was now visible. They called to him to stop; he heeded them not. A shot fired by Bernard missed its mark—but the whistle of the bullet discomposed the fugitive, who, in stooping his head, slipped and fell. Louis was upon him in an instant, inquiring who he was, and why he fled. The stranger, who wore a sort of long black caftan, replied in piteous and terrified tones:

"God of my fathers!" he cried: "have compassion, gracious sir! Why persecute the poor Jew, who does harm to no one?"

"Paul, a light!" cried Bernard, who just then came up. "Let us see who it is that is in such haste to crave mercy. His conscience seems none of the best!"

Paul lifted the lantern, casting the light full on the Jew's visage.

"The devil!" cried Bernard. I should know that face! Where have I seen the accursed mask? To be sure, those red-bearded Lithuanians are all aslike each other as bullets. But I greatly err, Jew, or you are the spy with whom we have an account to settle, that has stood over for the last five months!"

A shout from Rasinski interrupted the speaker.

"Hither, friends!" he cried; "your help here!" The three hastily obeyed the summons, dragging the Jew with them in spite of his struggles and cries.

"Here has been the most villainous crime the world ever witnessed!" exclaimed Rasinski, pale with horror and indignation, as his friends joined him. "Behold our comrades, driven out naked in this deadly cold, plundered, strangled, hurled from the windows! Inhuman monster!" he cried in a terrible voice to the trembling Jew, "if you have shared in this work, I will have you torn by dogs. See! here they lie. Horrible, horrible!"

In a nook formed by the recession of a house from the line of street, lay eight human bodies, half-naked, some with only a shirt or a few miserable rags to cover them. Over one of these unfortunates, who was still alive, Rasinski had thrown his furred cloak, to protect him from the piercing cold.

Louis and Bernard shuddered at this lamentable spectacle.

"God of Abraham!" cried the Jew, "to thee I lift up my right hand, and swear that I am innocent of this deed! May I be accursed with my children and my grandchildren if I know aught of it! May the ravens pick out my eyes, and the flesh of my hand wither, if I speak not the truth!"

"He was amongst the murderers," the wounded man faintly gasped out; "he was about to cut my throat, when the fall from the window did not kill me, and because I called for help. Only your arrival saved me!"

"Fiend, inhuman fiend! the unspeakable misery that might draw tears from a demon could not touch you!" Thus spoke Rasinski between his set teeth, and raised his sabre to split the skull of the Jew. In convulsions of terror the miserable wretch embraced his knees, and prayed for pity.

"God—Jehovah—mercy, noble Count, mercy!"

Louis held back Rasinski's arm. "Sully not your good blade with the monster's blood," he said, earnestly and solemnly. "Leave him to the justice of an Omnipotent Avenger!"

"You are right," replied Rasinski, quickly resuming his habitual composure. "Think you I have forgotten?" said he, with an expression of the deepest loathing, to the Jew, who still clasped his feet in agony of fear. "I know you well for the base and double traitor who once already escaped well-merited death. Nothing could save you now, were it not that even a villain like yourself may be made useful. Begone!—and warn your fellow assassins, that if to-morrow I find a single dead body, a single mark of violence, in one of their houses, I lay the whole quarter in ashes,—men, women, and habitations; and I myself will be the first to hurl the sucking-babe into the devouring flames! Away, dog! Yet will I mark thee, that thou mayest not escape!"

And raising his foot, he stamped thrice upon the face of the prostrate Jew, who belched like a wild beast, whilst his blood reddened the snow. Nevertheless, the murderer managed to scramble to his feet, and reach an adjacent house-door, where he stood knocking and calling upon his fellow Israelites for help and compassion.

"Assist me to carry off this much injured and abused man," Rasinski begged of the others, turning to the hapless sufferer, who with stiffened limbs was still lying on the snow.

They lifted him up. His distressing groans filled the air; but before they had reached the larger street, the sounds died away, for the powers of life were wasted.

"Thank you, comrades—it was too late!"

These were the last words his lips uttered.

"I cannot even give thee a grave!" said Rasinski mournfully, as they laid the body on the ground; "take thy rest here with the many thousands, which the implacable rigor of this soil refuses even to grant a spot to be buried in. Is it not enough that nature hunts us down with relentless fury, but man also must be transformed into a hyena, and break in upon us in the very sanctuary of our defenceless slumbers!"

Louis approached him with much sympathy. "There is a balm ready for you to apply to these wounds," he said; "we have joyful news, sir!"

"You? joyful news?" Rasinski rejoined, in a tone of bitterness.

"Your sister and Lodoiska are near—they are *here*,—you may embrace them in a very few minutes!"

"My sister here?" he exclaimed, more in dread than in joy, looking at Louis in amazement. "Oh, Johanna, what a sight awaits thee here! Our misfortunes were known in Warsaw then, it seems. Ah, Louis, Louis, your intelligence is as bitter as it is sweet! I was not prepared to meet her now!—and yet," he added, much moved—"what unspeakable happiness it will be to me to see her once more!"

The friends conducted him to Paul's house. Before entering, Rasinski stopped.

"And Lodoiska is with her? what shall we tell the poor girl? Jaromir is lost—a senseless, raving madman,—if he be not already released from his sufferings!"

"And if she has come in time only to receive his last sigh," Louis said with strong inward conviction, "still all the treasures of earth would not counterbalance this happiness to her even in the deepest sorrow. But how do you know, sir, but her appearance might have a magical influence on the unfortunate youth?"

"So, or otherwise, it must be endured; let us put on a manly resolution." So saying, Rasinski ascended the steps, exalted courage, and manly resolution, again enthroned on his noble brow. When about to open the door, he once more paused, and said to Louis: "Is thy sister here also?"

"She is," answered Louis.

The twitchings of his countenance were only hidden by the obscurity; and the transient blush which the proximity of this gentle being called up to his pale and care-worn cheek was seen by no one.

"Let me enter first," said Bernard; the ladies might be too powerfully struck by your sudden appearance."

"Not my sister, at least," answered Rasinski; "it may be so with the younger girls. Go, then, and tell them that you have found me."

Bernard ushered himself into the presence of the countess. A few minutes afterwards he opened the door for Rasinski. Lodoiska flew with a loud cry towards him; he clasped her closely to his heart with his right arm. His sister approached him tremblingly, and leaned on his shoulder; encircled by his left arm, she breathed out her feelings in a tearless kiss. Mary stood back, silently weeping.

"Sister," said Rasinski, after a silence, and disengaging himself from her embrace.

"And is it thus we must meet?" she cried in a penetrating tone.

"Take courage, thou noble heart! on the other side the grave there is no pain or sorrow!" Rasinski said, with that fortitude which can renounce even hope. "Till then, we shall know how to bear up under it. But thou, poor child," he said, turning compassionately to the pale and trembling Lodoiska, who still clung to his arm, "what comfort shall I offer to thee? Thou art yet so young, and hast so long a pilgrimage yet before thee!"

Lodoiska's inquiring eyes were riveted on his face, but she could not summon strength to ask a question concerning Jaromir.

"I understand thee, sweet child!" he said. "Thou wouldest know about Jaromir? Lodoiska, thou art a daughter of Poland. Fortitude in adversity is one of thy duties; for we are nursed in grief and fed in sorrow. Thou shalt hear the truth. Thy friend is living, but he is sick—grievously sick—dismal, feverish dreams trouble his soul. Prepare thyself for his loss!"

The maiden's bosom labored in convulsive throbs. At last she uttered:

"Where is he?—Let me fly to him!"

"To-morrow, dear soul!" said Rasinski, soothingly; "it is impossible now in the dead of night. He is in the hospital."

Mary now also advanced timidly, and said to Rasinski:

"We have not yet exchanged greetings. Let my first words be in support of *her* prayer. She loves—and a loving heart must break under such torture."

"In which hospital is the sick person of whom you speak, Count?" Paul asked.

"Close by the gate here, in the large building to the left."

"I have a key," rejoined Paul; "I will conduct the young lady there myself."

"Praised be God!" cried Lodoiska, with fervor. "Thanks—many thanks! Then I shall see him once more!"

"I will go with thee," said Rasinski resolutely.

"And I too," added the countess.

"All of us!" said Mary, in sisterly sympathy.

"No, Mary," answered Rasinski. "The

walk is not easily performed, and will not be a pleasant one. We must undertake it *alone*—*I insist upon it!*"

In a few minutes the countess and Lodoiska were ready. Rasinski requested Louis and Bernard to remain; while these, on the other hand, urged him to allow himself some necessary repose.

"Follow my orders, for the last time," he said. "Stay to protect the house. I must perform the office of guide; for no one knows where he lies but myself."

CHAPTER XCII.

The antiquated and dilapidated building in which the sick and wounded were packed had been a convent. Its sombre, shadowy outlines stood gloomily prominent to the visitors.

"I open this house with reluctance," said Paul, "for it does not look much like an abode of care and compassion for the suffering. It is destitute of everything—even necessary food—and straw for bedding is wanting! The physicians are too often changed, and the few young practitioners they send us hardly show themselves. They shun the horrid sight. The old, decayed vaults cannot even be made sufficiently warm; so that, in this severe cold most of the wounds become immediately gangrened, and the unfortunate wretches are carried off by scores. The whole house is nothing but a huge coffin, where the living are packed with the dead!"

While delivering himself of this remark, he opened the door with a ponderous key.

"Are there no attendants here during the night?" inquired the countess, shuddering.

"Not one," answered Paul; "there is not room. Here the dead must all the time give up their places to the living. Before the bed on which one dies has had time to cool, it receives another tenant!"

Lodoiska kept silence. She did not even weep. The flush of fever alone swept over her face.

They ascended the half-demolished stone steps, and then passed along a dark and long corridor.

"Here, in the last recess to the right, I found a place for him," said Rasinski: "conduct us thither, my friend."

"Does he lie *there?*" asked Paul, in significant alarm.

"Why does that surprise you?"

"Hem!—that is a chill and dismal place. It lies directly to the north."

"There was no other to be found; and the doctor whom I saw there promised to have good attendance given to the sick man."

"It may be all right," answered Paul, but in a tone as if he thought otherwise.

Their steps produced a hollow sound in the lonely gallery. Nothing was to be heard save groans and moanings on either side; the more dismal as they seemed to issue from the walls themselves.

"Here it is," said Paul, opening the door.

Even Rasinski shuddered as he stepped into this room, which he had been obliged to choose in the daytime, glad to obtain any shelter for Jaromir. A single flickering lamp filled the place with a half-glimmer. Wretches scarcely half-covered lay all around on scanty straw-pallets; some with deep and frightful wounds, others dreadfully dismembered, and so disfigured by wretchedness and filth that they were hardly recognisable. Their heavy breathings and hollow groans were the only sounds one could hear. An icy chill prevailed through the vault, for the windows were partly broken and gone; so that the snow drifted in, and the ice, like ever-increasing glaciers, protruded through the empty window-frames, and almost touched the wretched inmates.

"Here, then!" said Lodoiska, in a trembling voice, as she entered, and the cold chill struck to her heart.

Paul held the lantern to the faces of some of the sick. They stared at him with eyes wide open and ghastly, without moving a muscle.

"These are gone, friend!" said Rasinski, shuddering; "they are frozen to death!"

Lodoiska clung reeling with terror to the countess for support.

They were obliged to proceed between the rows of recumbent beings—this dread conjunction of the dead and dying—their feet often coming in contact with their bodies. The noble figure of Lodoiska hanging tremblingly on Rasinski's arm, floated like an angel of bright promise through these purlieus of corruption.

"It was well that we came with thee, child," said the countess, herself standing in need of all her inherent fortitude.

Paul now held up the lantern towards a dark corner, not yet reached by a single ray of light, from a large pillar throwing its shadow in that direction.

"There, lies yet one of the sick!" he said, pointing to the spot with his finger.

"Mother of God! that is he!" cried Lodoiska, terrified and shrinking back.

The dismal solitude itself seemed to start up in affright at this sudden cry of distress. Rasinski supported the sinking girl in his arms.

"Yes, it is he!" he replied. "He suffers greatly!"

"Oh, let me go near him!—let me kneel by his side!" she entreated, in faltering accents.

Rasinski supported her tottering steps, but Paul had to remove some dead bodies before they could reach the straw heap on which Jaromir was lying.

He lay closely wrapped up in a cloak; as the light fell upon his eyes, he raised himself upright. With a vacant, insane stare he fixed his gaze upon it; a feverish glow spread over his emaciated features, and he tried to clutch the flame with his hand.

The Countess, resolute as she was, stepped shuddering back.

"Is that the youth?" she ejaculated, "who a few months ago, was as fresh and jocund as the morning?—this pale and shrivelled spectre?"

"What do you want?" said Jaromir, slowly, and in a hollow tone. "Why do you come down here into my tomb?—Away with the torch!"

Lodoiska's intense suffering was firmly suppressed within her lips; love itself was struck powerless by this unprecedented trial.

"Jaromir! collect thyself, and be a man. Look at us, and know who are with thee!" said Rasinski, laying his warm hand on the unfortunate young man's brow.

It was apparent to all how his wandering mind struggled with the dimly arising consciousness called forth by the appearance of Rasinski.

At last Lodoiska's conflict with herself was at an end. She kneeled down by her betrothed, took hold of his hand, looked into his face, and uttered in broken accents:

"Jaromir, dost thou not know me more? Oh! only give me some token that thou still lovest me!"

Twice the maniac passed his hand across his forehead, as if he wished to remove thence some pain or oppression; a sudden and evanescent ray then shot from his dull eye.

"Lodoiska!" he cried, and tried to raise his arms; but it was in vain; he drew a deep breath from his innermost heart, then his frame collapsed, the eyes closed, and he sank motionless back on the straw.

"Blessed saints and angels, help him!—he is dying!" cried Lodoiska, wringing her hands.

"No, no! he is only overpowered!" said Rasinski. "Let us take advantage of this swoon, to remove him from this horrible place."

"My friend, the period of reward will arrive," she said, turning to Paul. "But now you must lend me your assistance; help me

to carry this unfortunate youth to your house. Here he *must* become death's prey!"

Honest Paul was ready to help.

"Willingly, willingly," he cried, "and it can easily be done. There are litters out in the passage, and there is room for one more in my house, I dare say."

They immediately put hand to the work, and carried out the lunatic. Lodoiska hanging on the arm of the Countess, staggered after them. Paul and Rasinski himself vigorously listed the litter.

They soon reached Paul's house; the faithful companions received their unhappy friend. Mary and Lodoiska seated themselves by the litter, to attend him during the night.

He lay in a perturbed half-sleep, talking frequently in his feverish delirium. The names of Lodoiska and Bianca were frequently on his lips. Only once he cried out: "Alisette, Alisette, thou beautiful serpent!"

It may be imagined with what feelings Lodoiska heard him utter this name! She had forgiven him so fully, so magnanimously, and his temptress and beguiler also! Oh, that she had been able to pour this balm of consolation into his lacerated breast.

Mary, overcome with weariness, had fallen asleep in an arm-chair. Lodoiska found hope and relief only in the ardent and pious prayers which she offered to heaven. She knelt down; raising her face and her heart upwards she besought the Almighty from a full and believing faith.

The tedious night at last gradually gave place to the grey dawn of approaching day. Lodoiska went to the window. The sky was clear; the twinkling light of the fading stars were yet seen. A purple tint glimmered on the eastern horizon, giving a roseate hue to the fleecy clouds. Lodoiska stood lost in profound thought; tears dimmed her eyes; but they were tears mild and beneficent, because they flowed from a fountain of holy trust and reliance, which after these past inflictions sprang up in her breast. She turned her head to the couch on which lay her lover. He slept calmly, and breathed quietly; a smile even hovered on his lips, and the first ray of morning fell gently upon his pale cheek.

It was no longer the stupefaction of insanity in which he lay fettered, but a refreshing sleep, which had followed upon his exhaustion.

"Holy Mother of God, surround him with thy blessed presence!" cried Lodoiska, while she approached tremblingly. An oppressive sensation rushed to her heart; the hope arose within her, that on awakening he would know his friends. Stooping over him with suppressed breath, she listened to his respiration and the beating of his heart.

The approach of morning dispelled much of the room's mournful aspect. The face of the sleeper partook of its change. Suddenly he opened his eyes and said, faintly :

"It is over now!"

His look was no longer wild and wandering; an inexpressible beaming was impressed on his features. Heaven seemed to descend with its raptures into Lodoiska's breast; but she checked herself, fearing by giving way too rudely, to snap the fragile, new-recovered thread of reason and consciousness. She asked only in a soft whisper :

"Art thou better, my friend?"

He folded his hands on his breast, raised his head a little, and in a tone of trembling adoration uttered :

"Oh, I know thee, thou holy one, surrounded as thou art by the golden glory of heaven! Thou art now a blessed spirit, and the gates of Peace unfold themselves to me also! Oh, reach me thy hand, in token of reconciliation!"

The sufferer, it was plain, still dwelt in the region of visions:—when she now, surrounded as with a halo from the bright reflection of the coming king of day, was kneeling before him with her flowing locks rolling over her shoulders, the faint and evanescent images of dreaming were imperceptibly transformed into reality to him.

Lodoiska extended her hand gently to him, and whispered in a sweet, trembling tone :

"Dost thou at last know me again? Oh, thou hast had a long dream! It is I myself, Jaromir, living and real!"

"Holy Father!" he stammered, "where am I then?—where was I?—No, no, ye fearful spectres of the night! do not come back out of that horrid darkness!"

He made a repelling motion of the hand, shrinking to one side. Lodoiska, as if to hide him from these terrifying visions, wound her arms tremblingly around his neck, and gently kissing him, drew him towards her.

"No, no, my love," she faltered, "fear nothing; thou shalt breathe and rest here; no frightful dream shall torment thee more!"

The maniac pressed his face to the bosom of the maiden. As his cheek rested on her breast, his ear detected the heart's pulsation. He awoke at once to a sense of truth and reality; the veil which had shrouded his soul in darkness was rent—but the last link of life was severed by the effort. He fell back, with a long drawn sigh, and expired!

CHAPTER XCIII.

THE grey stillness of morning was now made to resound with the hollow crashing thunder of cannon-shots, which caused the windows of the house to rattle.

"What is that?" cried Rasinski, springing up ready for battle.

But before the words had passed his lips, the whole tier of a heavy battery was heard, shaking the earth under their feet.

"Holy Father!" exclaimed the Countess, "are we so near the conflict?"

Mary stood pale and trembling, being altogether unaccustomed to this sort of music.

"I must go," said Rasinski, resolutely, "we are attacked, it seems!"

"We will go with you!" cried Louis, equally prompt; and Bernard sprang to seize his arms.

"No, not by any means!" said Rasinski, authoritatively. "You have nothing more to fight for in this contest. Stay and protect those who are dearest to you and me."

"We will not suffer you to go alone into the battle," cried Louis vehemently, endeavoring to detain him.

"You shall—you must! Duty calls me; you she binds to this spot," Rasinski answered firmly, pushing Louis back from him.

"No—you cannot take from us the privilege to stand by your side in battle!" said Bernard; "you can never absolve our souls, in case you fall where the assistance of a friend would have saved you!"

The drums rattled with deafening noise in the narrow streets. Wild outcries, the firing of cannon, and the clangor of trumpets mingling together, created a terrible din, while soldiers and people clustered together.

"If ye ever have respected my will," cried Rasinski, summoning all his natural dignity, "stay where ye are! At this moment, yield obedience to my wish for the last time. I command you to remain!"

The ladies were too excited by terror and grief, to feel in its full force the interest which this magnanimous contest would otherwise have excited. They experienced, though unconsciously to themselves, the beneficial effect of severe dispensations, which, when falling in repeated strokes from various quarters, simultaneously seem to neutralise one another, because the human breast, like a vessel, is capable of receiving only its measure.

Mary alone, whom the death of Jaromir naturally affected only secondarily, was fully alive to the issue of this noble contest between the devoted friends. While beholding how readily the brave man—the man who once offered her his heart, and in so doing had won her own, now again threw himself into

the midst of danger—devoted himself anew to glory and his country—the smothered flame arose in all its strength, and caused her to tremble for his life and safety.

Urged by these feelings, she stepped in between the men.

"Does duty yet claim your sharing in the battle?" she asked Rasinski; "is it still your duty to offer yourself as Death's victim, when nothing more is to be saved from this total shipwreck? Oh, remain with us also, lest the hour of meeting be not changed into one of inexpressible anguish, if——"

Here she paused; she had lost courage to say all that she thought and feared.

"Mary!" replied Rasinski, in a tone fraught with the whole ardor of his soul, "Mary!"

There he stood in intense struggle with himself, looking at her mournfully. In that moment he felt as if the iron barrier which interposed between them had been demolished. But the illusion prevailed but for a second. No sooner was the momentary mist of the golden dream, with its drapery of *couleur de rose* withdrawn, than the inflexible again stood before him more commanding and colossal than ever. He bowed to its behest, and said firmly, yet with affability:

"No, even this prayer from you, must not deter me! Farewell!"

He tore himself suddenly away, and hastened into the street.

Mary tottered like one stunned by a blow, and sank fainting into the arms of her brother. The keen-sighted Bernard deciphered her inmost heart. Rasinski had by one single word betrayed the secret of his breast.

The Countess appeared, having just left the chamber of death. Her step was slow and feeble. It was evident that it was with difficulty she maintained herself erect.

"My brother is gone!" she commenced, less in the way of a question, than an inferred self-reply; "he should at least have taken time to say adieu. Who can tell whether we shall meet again; for I am losing the power of harboring hope!"

She stood pale, but, majestically erect, as if refusing proudly to bow her neck ignominiously to the heavy strokes of fate; a tear, however, trembled in her eye. Mary and Bianca approached her with much sympathy; she stretched out both hands to them, and drew them gently near her:

"Oh, my daughters! You are young; life has early laid a rude hand upon you—but it never assailed you so fearfully as it has this poor girl, Lodoiska! What a fate is ours! Here, within, a deadly grief, which no soothing tear alleviates; all around, desolation, death, horror, and dismay! Do you hear those

murderous cannon? Perhaps from these windows we may witness a dreadful catastrophe!"

"Oh, never! never!" Mary interrupted her.

"Thou tremblest, poor child! Thinkest thou thus to propitiate inexorable destiny?—or that we have reached the bottom of this gulf? We may sink yet immeasurably deeper! Disgrace will now be added to sadness!—soon the enemy will triumph! Perhaps I may behold my brother in fetters, and bleeding, dragged past this house; it may be the fate of these young men, and ourselves also; for I am of Poland, and unquenchable hatred—an indelible branding—has been sworn against everything from thence. But, sooner than I will see those tender hands"—pointing to Lodoiska, "torn by cruel cords—sooner than I will see her chaste body surrendered a prey to the tiger-fury—and brutal lust of barbarian blood-hounds, shall my own hand stab her to the heart! A Polish mother is not weaker than a Roman father and *she* will not tremble at the prospect of death!"

She finished speaking under great excitement; breathing laboriously, she dropped exhausted into a seat.

Meanwhile, the din of battle drew nearer. Paul had hurried away to ascertain from which quarter the attack was made. He now returned breathless, and said:

A sanguinary fight is going on before the gates. I saw the count with Marshal Ney, snatching the muskets from the flying soldiers and hastening towards the ramparts, to dispute the entrance hand to hand. Inspired by this heroic example, the troops again collected and fought, while the rest were marching off through the other gates. The road towards Memel is already crowded. A few hours more, and the enemy must be masters of the town!"

Scarcely had he ceased speaking, when the door was violently pushed open, and Rasinski rushed in.

"Almighty God!—my brother!" cried the countess, springing towards him.

His forehead was bleeding; his face was blackened by smoke and powder, but his eye flashed as the lion's when about to dart on his prey.

"The most pressing danger is over," he said; "I snatched a moment to bid you all farewell. The marshal expects my return in a few minutes. The Russians will soon gain possession of the town. There is no longer time to escape by flight. Keep yourselves concealed therefore, until the first tumult has passed. Then you had better proceed to Warsaw, sister; there you will again hear from me. And you, my friends!" he said, turning to Bernard and Louis, "I advise you

to make your way into Prussia. It is to you the nearest safe resting-place. Our roads now take different directions. We have faithfully endured much together—now farewell!"

They all hung in Rasinski's embrace; he was not ashamed of the tears which watered his manly face—but he remained composed, for such was his will.

"This must come to an end," he said, after a solemn pause; "I have no more time to bestow on all those dear to me. To you, also, I say farewell!—Bianca—Mary!"

Bianca, who loved him as she would a father, leaped weeping on his breast; he kissed her on the forehead, and laid his hand on her head while blessing her.

Mary timidly stood at a distance. Rasinski approached her one step. "Mary," he said to her, "we see each other for the last time!"

Love and sorrow now assumed their sovereignty, and enforced obedience to their own impulses. In triumphant manifestation of their sacred rights, Mary, carried away by an ecstatic emotion, sunk on the breast of the noble warrior, and her maiden lips pressed his.

"Thou wast mine for one blissful moment, Mary!" he said, disengaging himself; "now, be again altogether thyself! Thou wert in the right, thou noble, generous soul! a deep river divides us, over which there is no bridge to pass, but one of guilt. Happy are we, that may not cross it!"

He then deposited the poor girl, dissolved in tears, in the arms of her brother. The next moment he was gone.

Mary hastened to the window, in order to send yet one look after him. In the streets thronged soldiers and citizens mixed in wild commotion. Rasinski stepped into the midst of them, and by his commanding spirit and appearance, immediately constituted himself their leader. Unsheathing his sword, he marched at their head into the heart of the town. In vain did Mary watch to see him once turn his face back to the house.

The raging tide of battle bore Rasinski quickly away, while its impetuous billows cooled his agitated breast. The enemy pressed onward, assaulting the town at all points. The houses shook with the thunder of cannon; trumpets flung their shrill notes to the air in every street; the distressing cries of women, the groans of the wounded, were heard everywhere.

The unutterable woe which filled the hearts of the ladies, left no room for solicitude and anxiety. Lodoiska scarcely heard the tumult in the streets. The countess was prepared for every event; she neither hoped nor feared anything. Bianca and Mary clung to their

brothers; and these were absorbed in the fight.

Suddenly musket shots were heard close in front of the house, and there arose a wild medley of cries. Bernard sprang to the window.

"The town must be surrounded!" he cried, "these are Cossacks, pouring in!"

A cohort of these locusts did actually enter by the gate, and fell upon a small number of the French, who were just about seeking an egress. But, the latter, though scattered, offered a determined resistance, and the space immediately before the house thus became an arena of battle.

"You had better retire into the back rooms towards the yard," said Louis to the ladies; "the balls might easily find their way here!"

"Then neither must thou tarry here," answered Bianca, "we will stay where thou art."

"Holy Father! I see Rasinski!" cried Bernard. The next instant a whole volley of musketry was heard.

Every one, even Lodoiska, hastened to the window. "Where?" asked the countess, "where is my brother?"

"There, where the infantry is coming on in close file. I saw him there just now, in the midst of the smoke, on horseback; but now he is hidden again in the cloud!"

"There he is! there he is!—now he dashes forward!" cried Louis.

"But how comes he to be on horseback?" asked the countess, in astonishment.

"Booty, booty!—it is a Cossack's horse!" said Bernard; "Marshal Ney is behind him! Do you see, there! They are about cutting their way through to us!"

The ladies trembled from fright. The battle raged fearfully. The grim monster swayed his deadly scythe over the heads of the combatants; the thunder-cloud of destruction rolled close above most precious lives. They wished to turn away from the harrowing sight, but were not able; the eye, as if fascinated, hung on the scene.

Rasinski dashed right into the canopy of smoke, flourishing his sword over his head.

"Forward! brave comrades, we must cut out a path for ourselves!" resounded his powerful voice, sending a thrill of enthusiastic courage even through the hearts of the women.

The troops advanced resolutely, Rasinski at their head. The Cossacks were borne down, and dispersed in confusion. They would speedily have turned to flight, had not the gate been blocked up by the cavalry which entered after them. Marshal Ney was stationed farther back in the street, arranging the troops rapidly coming up from behind. Rasinski looked sharply around after him. The marshal now raised his hat, and

swung it with its waving plumes high over his head. This appeared to be the preconcerted signal.

Surrounded by the foremost files, Rasinski rode forward; the troopers closed up behind. "Fire!" was his loud word of command, and the discharge followed. The windows clattered; the women uttered piercing cries; the street was thickly veiled in a cloud, while the wild outcries of the soldiery arose out of the black and sulphurous canopy.

A gust of wind dispersed the smoke. Rasinski immediately rushed through the cleared space. His nervous hand dealt a blow which prostrated a Cossack from his horse; another he laid low by the discharge of his pistol. His proud steed galloped away over their bodies, in venturous leaps. "Forward! comrades!" he cried, turning himself half round; "the way is clear! they fly! Victory! Victory!"

He threw one glance at the friends, and the trembling women, and with flashing eye, waved a farewell salute towards the window. Then dashing once more among the thickest of the flying enemy, his men following him with shouts, he vanished amidst the deafening uproar.

CHAPTER XCIV.

SINCE the events just related, two months had now speeded their flight. The hurricane which had shaken to the centre the foundations of society, was shorn of its strength! The black and heavy clouds withdrew—the heavens again smiled more mildly—the heart was enabled once more to put faith in a merciful and beneficent Providence!

Louis and Bernard, with Bianca and Mary, had reached Königsberg, and had at last found in that city a secure retreat, undisturbed by the terrors of war.

During this time, their health and physical powers, so severely taxed, had become recruited—spirit and body both felt the change.

The countess, through the mediation of Bianca, had obtained a passport, and with Lodoiska gone back to Warsaw.

The only sorrow which yet rested upon the two brothers and sisters was that suffered on account of Lodoiska, and the interest and anxiety they felt for Rasinski, who unweariedly suffered himself to be borne away, farther and farther, on the billows of a sanguinary war.

What a happy season did Louis and Mary now pass together, beatified by the sweetest sympathies, although interspersed at times

with the saddest recollections! In the first hours of their meeting they were so occupied and surrounded by stormy events, that the heart found no leisure to devote to the quiet enjoyment of contemplation. But now, in the long winter evenings, when these four true and noble hearts assembled together in a comfortable apartment, all their sorrows and hardships were richly compensated. They conversed cheerfully about the past, for the rising sun of the future already threw its rosy hue on those departed days. Yes, the thoughts of the brother and sister dwelt with composure and resignation on the tomb of their mother, though a hallowed grief would penetrate their souls, when calling to mind that loving heart and gentle hand which had so faithfully guided them through the slippery paths of their earlier days.

It was with pleasure that Louis observed the friendship which had sprung up between Bianca and Mary steadily expanding and flourishing; and with still deeper interest he noticed also, that Mary's sisterly affection for Bernard became every day the more warm, as his free and noble heart opened more fully to her inspection. A grave change had taken place in Bernard himself. His whole character became gradually more sedate and circumspect. Much as in the case of old wine, the former effervescence of his nature settled down to a clear and enduring placidity. The stirring conflicts in which he had participated, had already served to moderate the exuberance of his unschooled energies, and instilled sober and condensed reflection into his mind. But deeper than all did now the pure breath of love penetrate his restless and impetuous breast; the swelling flood of his fiery imagination was calmed down into placid serenity, as if fearful of grieving or scaring away so sacred an image. That gently restraining power which Bianca's society had formerly exercised over him, Mary possessed in a yet higher degree. He conquered himself manfully, apparently with the hope to deserve Mary's affection by his control and denial of self. He had read the most sacred page of her inmost heart, and as exalted spirits easily interpret and understand each other, he could with facility appreciate the conflicts which she had endured, and comprehend also why she had courted them. He knew her strong feelings of patriotism, which now revived with fresh hopes, and he knew what sacrifices she was capable of making on the altar of her country's freedom. He dared, however, to entertain but distant hopes for his passion; but still he possessed the certainty of her warmest friendship, and would therefore, for the present, not sue her for anything more. For this generous forbearance she was profoundly

grateful to him, for she did not undervalue the effort it cost him to achieve it.

The more conspicuous the deference, therefore, with which Bernard stood aloof, the more strongly Mary must feel herself attracted towards him—the more imposing her sense of obligation. Probably she could not have prevailed upon herself to concede to him her heart's affections; but when he silently and rigidly renounced himself, they imperceptibly turned more decidedly and cordially towards him, and she every moment felt the duty more binding upon herself, by yielding to secure the happiness of one who was prepared so nobly and uncomplainingly to resign it. The more love became her duty, the more duty was changed into love; and thus the immaculate and most beautiful flower of a virtuous attachment unfolded itself in the mild beams of gratitude and unalloyed esteem. There was nothing but the light and delicate veil of maidenly reserve on her part, and deferential awe on his, which kept the sweet secret undiscovered by these two loving hearts. He wanted courage to touch the blossom which timidly inclined its fragrant chalice towards him. Thus their hearts beat together, but in a suspense of trembling happiness; the precious fruit ripens early and unnoticed, and when arrived at maturity, the gentlest zephyr of a favoring gale causes it to fall into the lap.

Every German heart was already stirred powerfully. The iron yoke which so long had galled their necks was relaxed for a moment; and free and full of hope every bosom proudly inhaled the sweet air of liberty.

One evening, as the little household were sitting together in quiet sociality, there was a knocking at the door. On Louis' calling to the visitor to come in, Arnheim entered. Mary blushed and turned pale successively at his appearance. She at that instant first became sensible of the real state of her heart, by noticing the disparity of her feelings towards him and towards Bernard. The newcomer, being a stranger to all in the company but herself, saluted her, and approaching nearer said:

"I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw you this afternoon, about dusk, at the window of this house; but I soon learned that I was not mistaken. Permit me to apologise for my intrusion by communicating some agreeable news, which I felt in duty bound to impart to you as soon as possible."

"You are welcome in any event," answered Mary; "and doubly so if you are the bearer of good news for our country."

She then introduced him formally to her brother, to Bianca, and to Bernard.

"You will remember, that already in Warsaw, I told you something of a secret patri-

otic society," Arnheim began; "it is now time to speak more fully upon the subject; for the hour has come when it is to bring forth fruit. Germany is about to rise in her might—the whole nation is about to be called to arms. Prussia marches valiantly at the head. My own country is still fettered by many cunningly-contrived political ties; but still there is hope that Austria also will forcibly burst them asunder. She now contents herself by fanning the sacred flame in all breasts, and strengthening all resolutions, until the time arrives when she can step forward unshackled and powerful. I have consequently for some weeks been estranged from the service of the Emperor. I have entered that of the King of Prussia. The leaders of our confederacy were, sometime since, notified to hold themselves prepared for some decided demonstration on the King's part. To-day—only an hour ago—he anxiously looked-for intelligence arrived that it had been done. The King of Prussia speaks strongly to his subjects; he calls upon them to fight for their firesides and their liberties. A holy war is kindling, in which the nations will re-purchase their dearest rights, so long abused, with their own blood—a war which holds out to those who fall the palm of the martyr, and to the victor the garland of undying fame! Thus our country shall finally be emancipated from the chains of ignominy and suffering. This causes my bosom to swell with proud satisfaction, and makes me forgetful of the present, in the happy anticipation of the future."

In uttering the last sentence, he threw a significant glance at Mary, who well understood its meaning.

"You," he continued, turning to her, "I know to be so true a daughter of our country that, though you may smile at the conceit, I interpret it as a propitious sign from heaven to find you again, at a moment when in my power to bear so cheering a message."

"Please to accept my warmest thanks," said Mary, deeply affected—a beam of gladness lighting up her countenance. "What a glorious arch do your words spread over the bleak and leaden horizon of our unhappy country!"

"And a magnificent sun will arise in splendor," cried Louis, inspired. "Now—now first the days are coming when I can breathe happy and free! My heart's affection even blooms full and fragrant only in this new light! Oh, Bianca! hitherto thou hast been a flower, whose sweet odors carried a cheering presage of vernal charms into the dark prison-house!—Now, the first trembling ray of morning reaches us! It falls upon my heart as upon the pillar of Memnon, making it vocal with melody! Refreshing breezes play

around breast and temples!—the heavy curtain of dark and portentous clouds is riven in twain, and the whole rich, vernal landscape lies before us, in the glorious dawn of Liberty's day! Oh, Bianca!—what days are yet in store for us!"

Bernard had drunk in Arnheim's communication in a serious, but deeply wrought mood.

"I go to join the ranks of the brave patriots!" he exclaimed, in a tone of unalterable determination, giving Arnheim his hand.

"And I will fight side by side with thee!" cried Louis, enthusiastically. "We shall now first learn by experience with what feelings a man hears the thunder of battle rolling around him. Oh, I now bless that year of endurance which we have passed through; for it has been to us a severe but instructive school. I can now offer my country double satisfaction for the wrong which, against my will, I have committed against her. Hardened and injured by the horrid conflicts which are past, we can throw our influence with double effect into the scale of those contests which the future is preparing for us. Not being any longer tyros but tried men—steeled to dangers and hardships, we now know how to wield our swords. Oh, indeed, sister, thou sayest truly that a glorious radiance sheds its light on the bleak and dark night of our country!"

While Louis thus delivered himself of his enthusiastic ardor, Bernard walked up and down, immersed in troubled thoughts.

"I perceive what must be done," he finally began, "and my bosom also dilates with noble and patriotic feelings! But I cannot call it joy. If we have transgressed by taking part in this year's campaign, and had it been a holier duty to lay our heads on the block, and fall as defenseless victims to perfidy and craft—then a retributive Nemesis has now overtaken us; and she bears heavily upon us!"

Mary conjectured what passed within Bernard's breast. But Louis answered:

"I do not understand thee, Bernard. What kind of a Nemesis dost thou perceive in allotments, which I look upon as the most gracious dispensations of heaven?"

"I look upon them in the same light; but, does not a heavy penalty attach to us? Thy lofty enthusiasm has carried thee entirely away. Must I, then, tell thee what otherwise I would have heard from *thee*, who was ever my Mentor in virtue—so full of the noblest sentiment?"

"No more!" Louis interrupted him quickly. "I know what thou wouldest say. The sacrifice is bitter and difficult—it is the ring of Polycrates which we must throw into the sea!"

"I understand you both," said Mary, greatly moved; "but it must be!—it must, how-

ever bitter; and Rasinski will be the first to sanction your resolution. Of a noble and exalted spirit himself, his sympathies are enlisted for everything that is great, true, or honorable; but you must confront him frankly and openly. Let him learn it from no one but yourselves, that the day may come when you meet each other in hostile array."

"Thus let it be," Bernard replied hastily; "we will write to Rasinski as soon as we have determined what to do."

"Yes; determined on a matter which may be done very speedily," remarked Arnheim; "the step which would introduce you to the ranks of the defenders of the liberties of Germany, may be made this very moment."

"Let us go, then!" said Bernard, resolutely, "for there is no reason why we should delay."

They departed together.

The public papers of the next morning contained the call of the King addressed to his people—the proclamation of the third of February, eighteen hundred and thirteen. A glow of enthusiasm pervaded every heart. The Teutonic patriots rushed with loud cries to the waving banner of reviving liberty. Tears of gladness glistened in the eyes of the German maidens; their bosoms heaved exultingly in proud conscious patriotism. The mother gladly saw her son—the sister her brother—the affianced maiden her lover, making ready to march. Every tear of anxious misgiving was merged in the majestically swelling tide of excited hopes. Oh, happy time!—Oh, thou sun of liberty! with thy golden beams, which *then so fairly promised* to spread an ever smiling sky of spring and beauty over the broad plains of Germany!

Bernard and Louis enrolled themselves in the army. The very next morning saw them again in arms. Still an oppressive feeling burdened their breasts; too keen was the shaft felt which forced them into the position of enemies towards their most dear and worthy friend, the preserver and protector of their lives—to aim their weapons at his honorable person! Nothing would serve to abate this distressing feeling, until they had made a clean breast of it to their former brother in arms. Consequently, they embraced the first moments of leisure they could find as soon as they had taken the decisive step, in order to inform him of it themselves. Louis thus addressed him:

"**MY DEAREST FRIEND:**—I address these words to your great and noble heart. The current of events which brought me across your path, and deposited the security of my existence under your guardianship, has now again driven us asunder. But it not only separates us; it even bears me on against you in the guise of an enemy. I know that

you understand me, even without offering an explanation. The nations of Europe are about entering upon a fearful contest ; the individual cannot be absolved from defending the sacred interests of his country ; yet his heart may bleed under the cruel necessity which duty imposes. You received on board the shipwrecked mariner, when helplessly tossed on the billow—saved him, and set him securely on his native shore. And shall he now, in following the proudly-spread canvass of his country's fleet, hurl destruction where he once found safety ? My friend, you who know my heart, who have a thousand proofs of my respect, ask yourself the question, whether I can be ungrateful ? I know, and I rely with a hallowed and unshaken faith upon the conviction, that you will forgive me, that even this eruption of an untoward fate will not destroy our friendship. We may advance in arms against each other, but among the entire multitude of my fellow-soldiers, my heart will tremble for the safety of no one's life more than that of him whom paramount obligations compels me to oppose. May the prayers of our mutual friends be our shield and safeguard ; when the thunder of battle roars, Bianca and Mary will raise their hands to heaven in fervent supplication that we may be spared the extreme of calamities. A mild and brilliant star is visible to me through the dark cloud of the reeking battle-field—the star of Peace. These storms also will pass by. The roaring volcano which agitates the European continent to its very foundations, must at last exhaust itself, and the blood-stained torrents must be stayed—the rushing waters which now rage in deadly fury against each other, must turn back to their old quiet channels. Then, sir, when the flowery banks of our earth shall again be reflected in the mirror of quiet waters—when the fresh and purified sky shall again smile down upon us —when the God of war, weary and surfeited with slaughter, shall seek the most distant and sequestered caverns to find repose—when Themis shall sheathe her sword, and with an equal hand measure out the boundaries of the nations—then, Rasinski, the day will have arrived which shall award us a recompence for the most self-denying sacrifices ! We shall again embrace with our former love and fidelity on the charred ruins of the battle-ground ; and the surrounding destruction shall no longer affright us ; for the new tendrils of spring are already shooting forth, appearing in magnified beauty where the volcano has showered down its most blighting scoriae. Let our gaze be directed toward this distant goal.—Distant ! What do I say ? He who by his creative fiat in an instant called forth the heavens—luminaries out of chaotic darkness—before whom a thousand

years are one day—and who seeth the end from the beginning—He, by His Omnipotent arm, can knit us in the twinkling of an eye. Let us then put our trust in Him, for His mercy is infinitely great as His power !

" LOUIS ROSEN."

Bernard wrote as follows :

" RASINSKI :—Could I see you, eye to eye, and speak face to face, kind looks and language would disarm my present words of their poison. But we are both doomed to taste it, however much it may tear our vitals. On me it is that Fate is pouring out its vengeance. You know, sir, that for my friend's sake, I resigned my country—drew the sword, and inflicted wounds on the bosom which had nurtured me ! Now the ball rolls backward ; a malicious Nemesis arms me against the friend, and I am transformed into his enemy ! What boots it that my silly heart rebels against it, and is ready to break—rises in savage opposition, and threatens to leap out of my body ? Down, unruly member, down ! I have been, and am now, in the right. Unabashed, will I brave it out, and like a Spartan smile even on the rack on which fate thinks to wring from me a cowardly confession ! With thee, Rasinski, I will deal truly and above board. It is my sacred duty to press in upon thee—sword in hand, and to pierce the bosom which has so faithfully protected me, and with which my own heart has so often beat in consonance ! *Do thou to me likewise !* Oh, Rasinski ! that will be a delightful day, when we shall find each other as by the Mojaisk, amidst tempests and thunder-clouds, and like the two brothers before the walls of Thebes !—rush on, so that, pierced to the heart, we sink down to the ground together ! I now swear to thee, that I will not spare thee ; for I do not know that I could commit a blacker treason against my country ! *Do thou to me the same !* But when we both lie prostrate, side by side, with my dying breath I will call : ' Rasinski ! ' and thou wilt say : ' Bernard ! ' The national hatred will ebb away with our heart's-blood ; and the colder our bosoms become, the more intense will be their glow of undying affection ! Our lacerated hearts will cease to beat in our embrace ! Oh, it will be a pattern of a death, and they will mourn our loss—Bianca !—Mary !—The cry is "forward!" All the rivers, however wild their course, must finally reach the sea ; they are then at rest ; their billows are no longer urged impetuously onward. Till then, fare thee well !—

" BERNARD."

Mary and Bianca requested to see the letters.

"As you please, my dear friends!" Louis replied; but still, I think it will be better that you do not."

"No!" cried Bernard, "it is better for you to read them. You know *what* is going on, why should you not then also know *how*?"

Saying this, he handed them the papers, and they read them together, silently, but amidst a profusion of tears. Bernard, in great commotion, kept walking up and down in the meantime. Finally, he stopped, fronting Louis, and said:

"Oh, it goes through my very soul!"—And the two friends sank on each other's breasts.

Mary and Bianca each wrote a cordial and loving greeting under the lines of their brothers; and then the letters were despatched by the post.

Over a week elapsed before an answer arrived. This interval was, however, busily and restlessly employed in making preparations for the opening campaign. Rasinski's answer came at last. It was received by Bernard. He did not open it, but laid it aside until Louis came home.

When they were all together, he handed the missive to Louis, saying:

"Read it to us!"

Louis took the letter—broke the seal—threw a hasty glance over it, and then with a sad and tremulous voice, proceeded to read as follows:

"**MY FRIENDS**—I have received your letters—I expected them. The course you have taken is nothing but what an indispensable duty demands. If my friendship could be increased, this step of yours would effect it. The altar of a man's country is the most sacred to which he can bring his offering. The moment he is born he takes a mute but inviolable oath of fidelity to her. Keep that oath;—I also will keep mine; for I have solemnly sworn it, even when a boy, like Hannibal, though there was no Hamilcar to lead me to the sacrificial stone. I always entertained a deep veneration for the character of Brutus, who pronounced sentence of death upon his own sons; because they betrayed their fatherland. I should feel bound to award the same judgment upon you, if you committed the crime of which the sons of Brutus were guilty. No new sorrow can now affect my soul. I am accustomed to see the plants which my heart desired to rear and nurture trodden down by the iron heel of fate. I have made a sacrifice of all the light-hearted happiness of youth, and of the blessings of love, to the stern god of battles; and even the ties of friendship he now endeavors to dis sever, but that he cannot accomplish. Yes, my friends, I have become hardened in sor

row's severest school, and am invulnerable to her arrows. An impervious coat of mail encloses my breast. The heaviest blows of fate make no other impression than moving it with slight agitation. We must fight against each other—but still we may continue to esteem. The blood-stained sword of battle even cannot sunder the silken cords which unite our hearts. If we are not permitted, like the heroes of Homer, to yield respect to the hallowed rights of hospitality even in open encounter, we may, in a nobler spirit, lovingly press the hand by which we fall, to our hearts. But our God of mercy, into whose hands we confide our lives, will avert from us this extreme of misfortune. Friends, brothers!—a wise and merciful Being has tied a bandage over the eyes of man, that he should not see the future; it often is well for him also, that the present is shrouded in mystery. Let us ask for this blessing as a boon, and not cast it presumptuously from us. While the contest shall last which brings us in hostile array against, one another, let us guard our friendship within our silent bosoms. We must not make inquiries about one another, or know each other's actions or circumstances. For man must not vauntingly rely upon his own strength. If I should possess the knowledge where you stood arrayed against me as antagonists, the sword might, perhaps, fall from my grasp, and I should be rendered incapable of redeeming my sacred oath. Let, then, this controversy of the nations, which rises as an iron wall between them, dissolve all those bonds of affection and kindly sympathies which formerly have been entwined between ourselves and ours. Perhaps the day of peace for which thou hopest, Louis, will dawn upon us, and then we will find each other again. Should fate order it otherwise, so let it be. Soon enough we shall know it. Farewell, then, my friends!—and you, beautiful images, to whom my soul looks back with sweet regret—Bianca, Mary! Farewell, Mary!—may'st thou be happy! Thou canst; for youth still blooms upon thy cheek: and spring, which pushes the newly-scattered seed into a ripening harvest, is still present with thee. Be happy, and *make others happy!* It is enough. We part, perhaps, for a long time—but my hand is trying to touch the curtain which conceals the sacred features of futurity. Time alone can raise it. Farewell, even unto death! "RASINSKI."

The last bitter conflict of the heart was thus over. Now remained the more palpable one—that of the sword.

The bells gave out their solemn peals on the following morning from the towers and steeples of the city. The varied troops of

warriors assembled in the market-place;—thousands of citizens flocked thither also, once more to bid adieu to their departing defenders.

Bernard and Louis were accoutred and armed; their steeds were at the door, impatiently pawing the ground. Bianca and Mary were clinging to their brothers, bathed in anxious tears, but yet raised above themselves by the solemnity of the moment.

"Farewell, sister!" Bernard at last said, breaking the sad silence. "Farewell!—and thou Mary!—and thou!"

She wished to reach him her hand, but he drew her nearer to him, and she sank weeping on his breast, overcome by his noble affection. Bernard imprinted a gentle kiss upon her brow, and then said with firmness:

"No, thou sweet one!—I do not demand the decisive word from thee now—that word at which the blossoms of the happiness of my existence must either open with delightful fragrance, or else wither and droop. These stormy feelings of the moment must not extort it from thee! Thou must first be fully convinced whether thy deep wounds can heal. But the day of return will come apace;—this brilliant sun, which illuminates the cupola yonder, promises it. Then will I come to thee, Mary, and will ask of thee: 'Will thy noble heart devote itself to one who is faithful?'—but not now!"

With these words he tore himself away, and with Louis hastened out of the house. Mary fell on Bianca's bosom, faint and weeping.

They now heard the sound of the horses' hoofs galloping off. The troops were put in motion. Louis, Bernard, and Arnheim were among the foremost. They were followed by loud ringing of bells, waving of handkerchiefs, and vociferous shouts of encouragement. The swelling tide of joy and enthusiasm rose to its highest pitch, and on its waves carried the heart proudly away over the deepest forebodings of grief and danger. For the time was accomplished, the harvest was ripe, and the reapers went forth with bright sickles to the field!

CONCLUSION.

THE promise was victory—and victory was the fulfilment! The thunders of the last onset for Liberty on the borders of France had rolled away; the sacred banners waved the second time from the towers and battlements of Paris!

The tree of Germany's freedom had struck its roots deep in the midst of Russia's snowy deserts, and under the leaden sky of her rough winter's nights, proudly it grew up in the storm of those heroic days. Now, the vivifying sun of peace was to unfold its buds and blossoms, and develop its gladsome effulgence! Hearts still vibrated in anxious recollection of the yet sullen echoes and reverberations of the distant departing thunder; but the vault of heaven cleared up, and every heart drew down sweet, promising hopes!

The very grief for the many thousands who had fallen sacrifices in the purchase of this grand jubilee was changed into a sweet though sad source of happiness; for no blood but that of redemption had flowed!

* * * * *

In pursuance of Louis' expressed wish, Mary and Bianca had sought a quiet retreat on the peaceful farm near Dresden, where lived his maternal aunt—and where they were surrounded with the affectionate and loving playmates and companions of their youth. Here Bernard and Louis rejoined them; and here they consummated their happiness by entering into mutual and indissoluble bonds. Bernard's noble constancy and faithfulness had made Mary's heart all his own; the flower of her affection, which had so long been dimmed by sorrowing tears, here unfolded its chalice in freshness and bloom.

One cloud of trouble yet hung upon the brow of the happy ones dwelling here together. Peace had come; but as yet they had learned nothing touching that noble-minded friend, who, true to his purpose, had renounced them. A letter which Louis some weeks previously had dispatched to the countess at Warsaw remained unanswered. Were they to mourn that excellent man as among the dead? Had he, like the honest Arnheim, the poetical youth Berno, fallen among the victims which this sanguinary warfare exacted? These new subjects of grievous conjecture occupied these otherwise so happy hearts.

One evening, late in August, as the twilight had already begun to throw its obscuring veil over the horizon of the setting sun, Bernard, Louis, Bianca and Mary were sitting together before the pavilion in the garden. From the shrubbery on the hill where they sat, they observed a travelling-

carriage coming towards the house on the road running close by the garden-wall. The carriage stopped at the garden-gate ; it opened, and a tall, majestic female figure, dressed in mourning, entered, and came toward them.

"I should know this Juno!" said Bernard.

"It is the countess!" exclaimed Mary, who had known her the longest and most intimately, running to meet her in apprehensive surprise.

"It is, indeed!" said the new-comer, stopping and throwing back her veil.

She then opened her arms to receive Mary, whom she pressed passionately to her heart, and imprinted glowing kisses on her lips. Louis, Bernard and Bianca also drew near ; all received a silent, sorrowful, but affectionate salute from the lady.

She looked very pale. Grief had deeply furrowed her cheeks. She shed no tears ; but the fire of her eye seemed to be dimmed.

"I had a desire to see you once more," she said, after a long and painful struggle—giving a hand each to Bernard and Louis.

An enquiry after Rasinski lingered on every tongue, yet no one dared to give it utterance.

"And you come alone, entirely alone?" Bianca at last began, in a tremulous voice. "Oh, leave us no longer in such torturing uncertainty about the fate of persons so dear to us!"

The countess drew a profound sigh, and looked up to heaven.

"I come alone!—entirely alone! let that be my answer!" she replied, shrinking back.

"And Lodoiska?" Mary asked, with quivering lips.

"Dost thou think that she could survive her affliction?" Her lacerated heart rests in peace, now a year. She is happy!"

"And Rasinski?" cried Bernard, no longer able to contain himself.

A severe struggle was seen in the countess' features.

"He also is at rest!" she at length said, in measured accents. "He was last seen at Leipsic by the side of Prince Poniatowski. Farther than this, I know nothing concerning him."

A presentiment of something like this had long occupied their hearts ; but the confirmation of the reality pierced them with agony. Mary sank shuddering on Bernard's bosom ; he clasped her firmly, his head inclined upon hers, and his tears besprinkled her brow. Louis stood transfixed by the keenest emotions—his tear-dimmed eyes fixed on the ground. Bianca covered her weeping countenance, and reclined her cheek, faint and sick, on the shoulder of her husband.

"I weep no longer for him," said the countess, her voice trembling, however, as if greatly moved : "nor have I wept much. Happy is he that his eyes do not behold this day ! His noble heart could not endure our degradation ! Surely he is far better off!"

Mary stepped trembling up to her, and fell weeping on her neck.

"Oh, my protectress!" she sobbed, almost smothered by her tears.

"Daughter!—my daughter!" cried the countess, a torrent of scalding tears breaking forth. "A daughter at my bosom ! Oh ! now I can weep again!"

Bianca also approached, and placed her arm around the neck of the majestic woman. "Take your rest here among us," she entreated soothingly ; "we will be your daughters!"

The countess regarded her for a moment with an enquiring look ; a violent struggle agitated her bosom ; the proposal seemed to draw her with a gentle force back into life, once more within the circle of home. But suddenly she rose, proud and erect, withdrew from the embrace of the weeping women, shook her head, and said, "No, no, it cannot be!"

Her irrevocable purpose was so distinctly expressed in voice and attitude, that no one ventured to repeat the request. During this episode, Nadine, the fair-haired daughter of Alisette, had come skipping out from among the bushes, and stood lost in astonishment before the stranger, looking upon her with her full, sparkling eyes.

The countess was strangely moved at the sight of the child, for she recognised her immediately. "Dost thou know me yet, Nadine?" she asked, in a voice scarcely audible.

"Instead of answering, the little girl still kept looking at her, and then confidingly hid her curly head in her lap.

The countess pushed her gently away, and turned round to go.

"Stay with us, beautiful lady!" Nadine cried affectionately after her, as she proceeded towards the garden-gate. She turned quickly round, lifted up the child in her arms, kissed it, pressed it to her heart, and asked with much feeling : "Wilt thou go with me ? The child would be a sweet comfort in my secluded solitude," she said, turning to Bianca, and looking at her inquiringly.

"I can refuse you nothing—nothing that you may ask," replied Bianca, however deeply a separation from the endearing little creature pained her own heart.

"No, not that even," said the countess, mildly, after a few moments' inward conflict, setting down the child again on the green-

sward. "Why should I throw the black pall
of grief over her joyous youth? Why should
she walk only beneath weeping willows, in-
terspersed with mourning urns and death's
heads? No, I will not burden the days that
I may yet have to live—and I trust to the Al-
mighty that they will be but very few. I will
not aggravate them with such a reproach on
my soul. Remain thou among the happy,
sweet creature!"

She again kissed the child, and released
it from her embrace.

"I came only for the purpose of bidding
you farewell," the countess finally resumed.
"I trembled in view of this hour, but it
would have been wrong to have avoided it. I
am going to America! It may become a

new father-land to me, for it is the only coun-
try on the face of the earth where a free
heart may draw Freedom's breath. My home,
my native soil, is a cemetery, a prison-house,
a proscribed place of executions. Let the
wide ocean roll between us! But we will
not enhance the pain of leave-taking; boldly,
resolutely, let us sunder the last tie which re-
tains me. Farewell, dearest friends—follow
me not! Only after I am dead shall you
hear of me once more!"

She let fall her veil, and departed with a
proud and rapid step, waving her hand that
no one should accompany her. But the tear-
dimmed eyes of those who were left standing
on that hill followed the lofty figure until it
became lost in the shadows of night.

THE END.

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Ere long a vessel heaves in sight, which proves to be the missing man, returning from America, whither he succeeded in arriving after his perilous launch, bringing with him his own wife and his friend's wife, other friends, stock, cattle, and all things necessary for a new colony.

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